

FUTURE

NOV. SCIENCE FICTION 20¢

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COLOR PRESS**

by **RAYMOND F. JONES**



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FUTURE

SCIENCE FICTION

Robert W.
Lowndes,
Editor

Volume 3

November, 1952

Number 4



Feature Novélet

DOOMSDAY'S COLOR-PRESS

by Raymond F. Jones 12

There's power in the printed word that hasn't been tapped yet — if this story, by a master of science-fiction, is entirely fictitious!

A Novélet Of The Great Legend

...AND FOUND WANTING Wallace West 54

There comes a day when gods must be weighed in the balance!

Short Stories and Departments

DOWN TO EARTH (*Editorial comment and Readers' Letters*) 6

WE ARE ALONE Robert Sheckley 31

Other beings might know us better than we know ourselves!

LEGION OF THE LOST Alfred Coppel 41

The basis of this story is fantastic — but factual . . .

READIN' AND WRITHIN' (*Book Reviews*) Robert W. Lowndes 46

THE WINNING OF WOoha R. R. Winterbotham 47

Phil Jerome believes what he sees, only he doesn't know what he's seeing!

THE RECKONING 96

Here's the consensus of opinion on our July issue.

READERS' PREFERENCE COUPON 96

We like letters, but if you just want to vote, here's a simple way to do it.

Cover by A. Leslie Ross, symbolizing the threat of "Doomsday's Color-Press"

Interior Illustrations by Luros and Orban

FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION, November, 1952, published bi-monthly by COLUMBIA PUBLICATIONS, INC., 1 Appleton Street, Holyoke, Mass. Editorial and executive offices at 211 Church Street, New York 13, New York. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at Holyoke, Mass. under the act of March 3, 1879. Entire contents copyrighted 1952 by Columbia Publications, Inc. 20c per copy; yearly subscription \$1.20. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return, if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Printed in the U.S.A.

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Tested Way to Better Pay

The ABC's of SERVICING

How to Be a Success in RADIO-TELEVISION



Down To Earth

THE NEWS, if you haven't already seen it in our sister-magazine, *Science Fiction Quarterly*, is that you'll see the first issue of another companion-magazine to *Future* next month. Requests for more frequent issues of *Future*, or more pages to each issue, have been coming in for some time; followed many conferences with the Front Office, which finally decided that another companion magazine was the best bet. So, watch for *Dynamic Science Fiction*!

It'll be the same size and price as *Science Fiction Quarterly*, and A. Leslie Ross has done a cover which—according to your editor's crystal ball—should appeal to both sides of the girl/no girl argument. This one has a gal, but the cover wouldn't classify as "girly". It illustrates a short story by Alfred Coppel, entitled "Blood Lands", quite appropriately, you'll see.

Leading off the issue is "I Am Tomorrow", a powerful novelet by Lester del Rey; we're also pleased with short novelets by Dave Dryfoos and H. B. Fyfe, scheduled for the first issue, and believe you'll be pleased, too.

Dynamic Science Fiction will con-

tain the best features of *Future* and *Science Fiction Quarterly*—meaning, types of stories, authors, etc., who have been approved most highly by you readers throughout the past two years. We don't expect to be able to tear the lid off any cosmic secrets or uncover lost continents; we doubt that DSF will present any discoveries in science or medicine rivalling the discovery of the arch, the wheel, fire, or firewater in importance; we cannot even guarantee that reading our fiction will mature you, or that any literary masterpieces will first appear in our pages.

All we *promise* is this: intelligent entertainment on as high a general level of excellence as we can obtain for you. And, as with *Future* and SFQ, we're not only amenable to suggestions, criticisms, and so forth, but we welcome same.

PARTICULARLY will we welcome letters of suggestions for the new magazine in relation to features you have not seen in *Future* or SFQ, or specific features you feel should

[Turn To Page 8]

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not be repeated. The first issue will probably contain the letter-department, book reviews, an article, and the readers' preference page. Whether they continue will depend upon your response.

And don't hesitate to ask for things which haven't been feasible in the past, or which seem doubtful. It's true—we can't offer trimmed edges, high grade paper, etc., immediately; but consider the difference between this present issue of *Future* and our initial issue, dated May-June 1950. Many of those differences were made possible through your letters of praise, complaint, and continual plugging for things you wanted, as well as the support you cash-customers have given merely in buying the magazine.

In short: vote early and often!

Letters

MORE ON NOSTRADAMUS

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

"Truth is Stranger than Fiction"

Brother L. Sprague de Camp himself admits authorship of an article in *Esquire* magazine, December 1942, the gist of which is "You too, can be a Nostradamus". Quite innocently, and with charming naivete, Mr. de Camp proves the case for Prophecy and Nostradamus. In the preface to the first edition, dated March 1555, Nostradamus addressing his son Caesar (by implication, you the reader) states that he purposely obscures the meaning of his prophecies, so that men in future ages—trying to decipher them—would be provocatively inspired to helpful thought and action.

Here we have the great Seer looking forward into time and having (as it were) Mr. de Camp and other commentators on his work, reiterating his thought that in studying the predictions, they too, would be spiritually and divinely inspired.

In regard to the statement made by Mr. de Camp that there is no "hard evidence that Nostradamus ever 'really saw through time' we have only to mention the fact that Nostradamus gave the exact date—"1792"—of the French Revolution? Here are his actual words "and it shall be in

the year 1792, at which time every one shall think it a renovation of the Age". Historical data shows that in that year the new French Republic discarded the Christian calendar, and instituted the year 1 of the new order. In passing, it may be of interest to note that the obverse of the great seal of the United States bears the legend "Novus Ordo Seclorum" which translated from the Latin means "A new order is declared for the Ages," and was finally ratified by constitutional amendment by the states in 1792.

The appeal that Nostradamus has for the millions of people he has inspired to helpful thought and action is basic. His over-all message is one of hope and eventual freedom from War to a myopic earth—bound humanity enslaved by the boundaries of their physical concepts.

Among the many great minds inspired by Nostradamus, we may quote Goethe. In Act 1, Scene 1, of "Faust", we find the following: Faust about to commit suicide, tired and disillusioned with the ways of the world, accidentally picks up an ancient tome.

"Up! Flee! Out into the broad and open land!

*And this book full of mystery,
From NOSTRADAMUS' own very hand,
Is it not sufficient company?*

*The Star's course then you'll understand
And nature, teaching you, will then expand*

*The power of your soul, as when
One Spirit to another speaks.*

In other words, the complete prophecies of Nostradamus is the first and most profound of science-fiction books, and his predictions—extending to the year 3797 AD—have never been disproved, since their first appearance in 1555.

"Seek and Ye shall find".

Henry C. Roberts, 293 West Broadway,
New York 13, N.Y.

(Gentlemen, the field is yours!)

CALLING VON HOHENHEIM

Dear Sir:

I started to put this under "general comment", but I realized it would never fit.

[Turn To Page 10]

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We Start You FREE—Don't Invest One Cent!**

MAKE BIG MONEY

WITH FAST-SELLING WARM

MASON LEATHER JACKETS

Rush Coupon for FREE Selling Outfit!

NOW IT'S EASY to make BIG MONEY in a profit-making, spare-time business! As our man in your community, you feature Mason's fast-selling Horsehide, Capeskin, Suede, other fine leather jackets—nationally known for smart styling, rugged wear, wonderful warmth. Start by selling to friends and fellow workers. Think of all the outdoor workers around your own home who will be delighted to buy these fine jackets from you: truck drivers, milkmen, cab drivers, gas station, construction men—hundreds in your own community! You'll be amazed how quickly business grows. And no wonder!—You offer these splendid jackets at low money-saving prices people can afford! Our top-notch men find it's easy to make up to \$10.00 a day EXTRA income!

SHOE AND LEATHER JACKET ARE BOTH
LINED WITH WARM SHEEPSKIN!

These Special Features Help You Make Money From First Hour!

• • • Men really go for these warm Mason jackets of long-lasting Pony Horsehide leather, fine Capeskin leather, soft luxurious Suede leather. You can even take orders for Nylon, Gabardine, 100% Wool, Satin-faced Twill jackets, men's raincoats, too! And just look at these EXTRA features that make Mason jackets so easy to sell:

- Warm, cozy linings of real Sheepskin - nature's own protection against cold!
- Quilted and rayon linings!
- Laskin Lamb waterproof, non-matting fur collars!
- Knitted wristlets!
- Especially-treated leathers that do not scuff or peel!
- Zipper fronts!
- Extra-large pockets!
- Variety of colors for every taste: brown, black, green, grey, tan, blue!

Be the first to sell men who work outdoors this perfect combination—

Non-scruff, warm Horsehide

leather jacket lined with wooly Sheepskin—and new Horsehide work shoe also warmly lined with fleecy Sheepskin and made with oil-resisting soles and leather storm welt!

Even MORE Profits with Special-Feature Shoes

Take orders for Nationally-advertised, Velvet-ez Air-Cushion shoes in 150 dress, sport, work styles for men and women. Air-Cushion Innersole gives wonderful feeling of "walking on air." As the Mason man in your town, you feature more shoes in a greater range of sizes and widths than the largest store in town! And at low, direct-from-factory prices! It's easy to fit customers in the style they want—they keep re-ordering, too—put dollars and dollars into your pocket! Join the exceptional men who make up to \$200 extra a month and get their family's shoes and garments at wholesale prices!

Send for FREE SELLING OUTFIT Today!

Mail coupon today—I'll rush your powerful Free Jacket and Shoe Selling Outfit including 10-second Air-Cushion Demonstrator, and EVERYTHING you need to start building a steady, BIG MONEY, repeat-order business, as thousands of others have done with Mason!

SEND FOR FREE OUTFIT!

Mr. Ned Mason, Dept. M-905
MASON SHOE MFG. COMPANY,
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

You bet I want to start my own extra-income business! Please rush FREE and postpaid my Powerful Selling Outfit—featuring Mason Jackets, Air-Cushion Shoes, other fast-selling specialties—so I can start making BIG MONEY right away!

Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

Town.....State.....

MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
DEPT. M-905
Chippewa Falls, Wis.

Yes, I am in favor of your running a series of novelets, which add up to a single book length novel—if they don't just seem like serials. I just don't seem to be compatible with those fiendish bits of writing that leave you (me, that is,) hanging on air for periods of a month. Here at the great Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy, they try to teach us to be logical—and to my logic, it just isn't logical to ruin a good story by chopping it up into bits any more than it is logical to take a timber and chop it up. I'll admit that on the same analogy, it doesn't hurt to take a story and shape it and square it up some what.

And as to that (?) story, "Rejection Slip", wha' hoppin'? Maybe I've been reading too much stoichiometry etc., and have forgotten how to read that kind of script, but how about sending me a translation or interpretation of some or some kind of idea as to what was supposed to happen.

I can't say that I was too interested in Mister de Camp's "The Mislaid Tribes". Why don't you ask him to write an article on the antics of Phillippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, (1490-1541) who, under the name of Paracelsus, wrote many alchemical treatises. The only part of his many works that I possess, reads: "*Know then that all seven metals are born from a three-fold matter, namely, mercury, sulphur and salt, but with distinct and peculiar colorings. Mercury is the spirit, sulphur is the soul and salt is the body. The soul, which indeed is sulphur, unites those two contraries, the body and the spirit, and changes them into one essence.*"

And later: "*The three principles...from which all things are born and generated are phlegma, fat and ash. The phlegma is mercury, the fat is sulphur, and the ash is salt. For what which smokes and evaporates over the fire is mercury; what flames and is burnt is sulphur; and all ash is salt.*"

Now this sounds like a learned and experienced man (for his time) and is extremely interesting—especially to anyone interested in chemistry and the founding of the various sciences.

Well, this is just my opinions, so we'll let set 'er stand.

Claude Ashburn, 202 MSM Dormitory
Rolla, Missouri

(If Sir Sprague hasn't already dealt

with Messer von Hohenheim, the door's wide open for an article on him here.)



PLEASANT SURPRISE

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

This is the first time I have attempted to write a letter—critical or otherwise—to a science-fiction magazine, having only become interested in SF about two years ago.

Ordinarily, when Stateside, I pass up what is known as 'pulp' when browsing for SF, because I have tried them upon occasion and found them sadly lacking in interest, readability—and plot.

However, your magazine was a pleasant surprise. I wrote to the States requesting a few SF magazines—and yours, and a few others arrived last week. I was inclined to look with disfavor until I ran down the table of contents; but being greeted by de Camp, del Rey and Berryman, I delved deeper and found your magazine quite well set-up.

I have enclosed your 'Reckoning' not knowing whether it will arrive in time or not. I had a rough time choosing between "Forgive Us Our Debts" and "Rejection Slip", but the humor won. I was almost on the verge of giving de Camp's article the "X", but I figured it was only my disinterest and not his article.

Science-Fiction magazines are a rarity in the Far East Command, so we must content ourselves with what library volumes are available. This, you can see, could lead to a problem on a small ship. I, and many others, would appreciate it very much if you Sf editors would squeeze your publication into the FEC.

Future, I think, is a better than average magazine, and I'm blaming the type of newsprint on the price.

Norman J. Thompson USS LST-1148
3rd Div. c/o FPO, San Francisco.

(You are quite right about the cost of paper being responsible for much grief; it's a problem maintaining the lower price as is, let alone offering higher quality printing-material.)

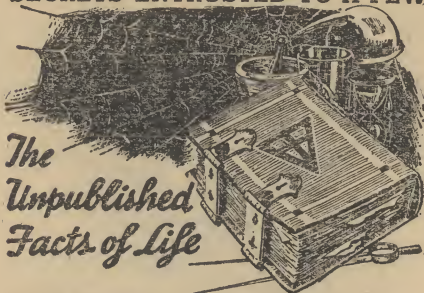


NOT QUITE FICTION?

Dear Sir:

I picked up my first copy of your maga-
[Turn To Page 85]

SECRETS ENTRUSTED TO A FEW



The Unpublished Facts of Life

THERE ARE some things that can not be generally told—things you ought to know. Great truths are dangerous to some—but factors for personal power and accomplishment in the hands of those who understand them. Behind the tales of the miracles and mysteries of the ancients, lie centuries of their secret probing into nature's laws—their amazing discoveries of the hidden processes of man's mind, and the mastery of life's problems. Once shrouded in mystery to avoid their destruction by mass fear and ignorance, these facts remain a useful heritage for the thousands of men and women who privately use them in their homes today.

THIS FREE BOOK

The Rosicrucians (not a religious organization), an age-old brotherhood of learning, have preserved this secret wisdom in their archives for centuries. They now invite you to share the practical helpfulness of their teachings. Write today for a free copy of the book, "The Mastery of Life." Within its pages may lie a new life of opportunity for you. Address: Scribe I.Q.M.

The ROSICRUCIANS

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Scribe: I.Q.M. The Rosicrucians (AMORC)
San Jose, California, U. S. A.

Please send copy of sealed booklet, "The Mastery of Life," which I shall read as directed.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____



"I'm busy selling newspapers—to robots who can read," Myrna said. And, somehow, that seemed to be the effect of the *Tribune*; people read the slanted stories, the glittering half-truths—and believed, even though they knew better!

DOOMSDAY'S COLOR-PRESS

You've all seen stories in various science-fiction magazines presented with the "This-may-be-more-than-Fiction" pitch. Mr. Jones offers us nothing in the way of subterranean little green men, lost continents, or flying chinaware. In fact, you will see why the editor wondered if this were science-fiction at all, at first. But, when you finish it, I think some of you may agree with me in hoping it is only fiction!

Feature Novelet

Of Fearful Possibility

by Raymond F. Jones

A journalist must know the Kiersten Equations, first of all. The text is two inches thick and requires a year of solid study after Basic Semantics and the Symbolic Logic of Communication. But you can't write a Chamber of Commerce puff without knowing them; Central Reviewing would trip you instantly.

Today, with communication free between every nation and race and color, there is no possibility of one group misunderstanding another. It is difficult to believe that there was a time when the Kiersten Equations

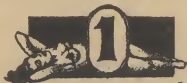
tions were not applied. The positive roots, that is.

Negative roots of the Equations were used in a haphazard way long before Kiersten's time. That, of course, is why Kiersten discovered the negative roots first—and why Myrna Doring had only these to use.

But, except for Myrna Doring and John Sanford, the Keirsten Equations might have been swallowed up for another century of interracial misunderstanding and war.

The texts don't mention Myrna Doring and John Sanford. All reference is to Kiersten himself and to Andrew Lollar, who developed the positive roots—which is as it should be. But in the news stories of a half century ago and in some of the early histories of that time you get a clue to what they did.

Myrna Doring died a long time ago, and Sanford's name was quickly lost in the glare of light that the Kiersten work shed on the communication of a world. But they are the ones who brought out of obscurity Kiersten's elementary principles of how all men could speak freely and be forever immune to lies.



AFTER SUNDAY School, it was funny-paper time in the Sanford household; Jack Sanford did the reading, and little Judy and Les did the listening.

As managing editor of the *Westport Tribune*, Sanford could bring the funnies home on Wednesday night, when they were printed; months ago, Georgia had made him save them for Sunday afternoon—to give her free reign in the kitchen to get dinner without the small fry underfoot.

Sometimes, Georgia worked closer to the kitchen door than necessary and kept an ear cocked for the latest adventure of "Betty, the Super-Cow-girl", and "Eagle Boy" in his quest for the Jasmin Trophy. San's delivery was worth listening to.

She glanced fondly toward him now, as he sat with Judy and Les on either arm of the chair; he fanned out the bright, colored pages of the comic-section, and raised one before him until

Georgia could see only his black and faintly-thinning hair above the edge of the sheet.

"Let's see, kids," he said. "Last week we left Dragon Man at the bottom of this inescapable well. How are we going to get him out today?"

Framed in the doorway Georgia made the kind of picture San never tired of. She had a crisp apron over her Sunday dress; the smooth lines of her hair swept back to an old fashioned bun on the back of her head. She always complained about the need of losing ten pounds, and San equally remarked, "On you, honey, it looks good."

She frowned a little now. "I don't think you ought to read "Dragon Man" to the kids. It gives me a squitchy feeling."

San laughed the superior laugh of a comic connoisseur, and the children joined in. "You don't know what you're saying, woman," he said. "Why, "Dragon Man" gets in the most stupendous, super-colossal jams of any superman that ever breathed the red and green ink of a comic strip. Go back to your cooking, woman; after we've wrastled Dragon Man out of this hole, we'll be ready for it."

Georgia smiled, but her face remained serious. "I mean it. There's something I don't like about that strip at all; you ought to get Myrna to take it out."

She went back to the kitchen and left San feeling let-down. Dragon Man wasn't very ingenious this week, anyway. He simply flicked his claws into the side of the hole and climbed out.

The kids thought it was great. They bounced around on the chair arms as San described with all the artistry he possessed the mighty exertions of Dragon Man climbing vertically upward a half mile or so.

"Mommy just doesn't know what's good, does she?" said Les.

"Sure doesn't," agreed San.

Georgia called, "Come and get it."

AFTER DINNER, San paced the living room floor, restless and undecided. He wanted to join the kids with their tinker toys, but he glanced at his watch. "I ought to go down to the office for a couple of hours."

"Not again!" said Georgia. "I don't think you have spent a Sunday at home since Myrna took over. Do you personally have to put every edition to bed?"

He ran his fingers through his hair. "She's planning how to handle a series on the Collins case. If she puts it through, we might as well change our name to the *Yellow-Backed Gazette*. I'll try to be back by five."

"You kids see if you can have me the five story windmill built by then. O.K.?"

Westport always looked its best on Sunday afternoon, San thought. The lawns seemed a little greener, and at this time of year the apple blossoms a little more fragrant than on other days. Even his neighbor, Matthews looked good wheeling San's noisy mower about, while San's own lawn was shaggy with a two week's growth.

It had never been necessary to work Sundays when Old Bob Doring had the paper.

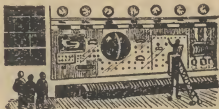
"The family man ought to be home on Sunday," he always said. "Us old guys and the young squirts can put out a paper that'll get by."

Old Bob had been dead for six months now, but the *Tribune* was Old Bob Doring; the *Tribune* would go on, even if his daughter was the owner and publisher now.

Doring had built the paper up from a small-town weekly that he had started nearly forty years ago. He had spent all his own younger days nursing it along, and had married later; Myrna was his only child. He had even left enough cash to pay the taxes, so that she'd had to borrow very little and now controlled the paper single handedly.

San parked at the rear of the build-

ing and let himself in through the shipping dock doors. He walked past the press room where the new twenty four sheet presses, Old Bob's pride and joy, were being readied for the evening edition. Upstairs, in the seventh floor editorial offices, the hall seemed lonely with only the scattered clicking of the skeleton Sunday staff at their typewriters.



His own office was near Myrna's. He stopped a moment to look at the lettering on the door: *John L. Sanford, Managing Editor*. It had been a day of incredible pride when he had come back from some wild goose chase Old Bob had sent him on, and found that new gold lettering.

It was a little flecked and tarnished now. Ought to be touched up, but it could go a while, he thought. He seriously wondered if Myrna Doring were going to keep him on.

On the desk he found a note from her: *Come to my office when you come in.*

She had known he would come in; she seemed to know just what everyone around her would do. San went down the hall to the door with the brand new lettering: *Myrna Doring, Editor and Publisher.*

She called out softly as he knocked. When he entered, she was sitting behind the desk by the window; sunlight made golden fire in her hair.

Myrna was as deceptive as the first sunny day of Spring. She was blonde and dreamy eyed, and at first sight you would have given odds that she was a night club singer. Just looking at her, you knew what she could do with a blues melody.

She had been running around the place in bobby sox when San was

made Managing Editor. Old Bob had great hopes for her; it was rumored that he used to put a drop or two of printers' ink in her nursing-bottle.

But Myrna had gone away after the bobby-sox period. College, travel, and a lot of activities that San knew nothing about. There had been some surprise when Old Bob left her the paper. There was even more when she took it, and announced her intention of running it.

"I'M GLAD you came in," she said to San. "I want your advice on planning these Collins stories."

"You knew I'd be in."

"Did I?"

"You know I don't agree with your slant on Collins."

She frowned. "I had really forgotten; I should have known you well enough by now to know you'd be sympathetic to him."

"Why shouldn't I be? The poor devil spent a life time building a business and a fortune and a good reputation, and now he's watching it all go down the drain because of a two-bit little sharpie who had conducted a merciless campaign to take him for everything he's got."

"She's a lying, stupid brat who ought to be tossed out on her plump little fanny. That's the way it was done when Old Bob Doring started here."

"We do things differently now," said Myrna. "Marylinne Porter is the innocent victim of a vicious old man who is going to be taught that all his money, even before taxes, isn't enough to buy a young girl's life which he can carelessly toss aside when he's through."

San sagged. "How do you expect me to go along with that garbage?"

"You know you go along with it—or you don't go along."

"That's what I mean."

"Those two kids of yours are going to be expensive in school," said Myrna.

Then she came up behind him and took his arm, turning him half around. They faced each other by the window. "Why don't we understand each other?" she said. "We've been fighting since I took over the paper, and it can't go on. I'll be honest with you, San; I don't know where I could find another editor who could run the office the way you do."

"Fine," he said. "So why not let me run it and you dally around the social high spots and pick out a husband you think you can handle?"

Another woman might have screamed and shouted and stamped her foot on the floor. Myrna expressed the same emotions by smiling slowly, and dropping her eyelids a trifle. "I'm not interested in a husband of any kind now, or for a long time in the future. For your private information, I'm interested in only one thing: selling newspapers. And if you've checked our circulation lately you're aware that I am doing a pretty good job of that."

"The Metcalfe story, the police deal, the school trust fund expose, the Richardson case—all of them were handled the way I wanted them, after you tried to oppose each one. The result is an almost fifteen percent increase in circulation in six months."

"You'll appreciate that, since I'm sure even you admit a newsman's first job is to sell papers."

"I'm not so sure of that," said San slowly. "A newsman's first job is to provide a line of communication, to help people understand the truth about one another."

"What is the truth? How do you find it out? You see through a set of lenses so poor that no self-respecting optician would own up to them. You hear through an audio system with a response that's laughable. You touch, you smell, you taste—with equally feeble senses."

"This is your communication! You have no possibility of ever finding out the truth about anything, San."

You're a ghost, walking in a world of ghosts.

"A newspaper makes up a dream and it becomes a reality for a hundred thousand readers. You say a man is good and he *is* good. You say a man is bad and they clamor for his blood. And no one, not even you and I, know whether he really is good or bad.

"You communicate what you want to communicate. The readers accept what they want to accept. You may as well give them what they want; that is the only reality between you and them, and you achieve your ultimate goal of selling papers.

"That's what the gold letters on your door mean, San, and don't you ever forget it, or they aren't going to stay there."

He smiled bitterly. "I'll let you know when I'm ready to have them scraped off, Myrna—but not more than about five minutes before."

For an instant it seemed as if a shield about her went down. She spread her hands before him in a single gesture of pleading. "This is all so unnecessary. We both want the same thing, a successful newspaper; we can work for it together."

She seemed like the bobby-sox kid he used to let the climb on the big rolls of newsprint in the basement, but he knew how to kill that illusion. "Sure," he said, "as long as I help you crucify guys like Collins, and Dickinson, and the others."

The shield closed again. "We understand each other at least. And we both know whose policy is going to govern this paper."

"Yes, until you perhaps learn that human beings are not robots with a mechanical response to the waving of your printed pages, robots to be trapped by offering only the things they want to believe."

"That's all they are, until they are willing to act like human beings."

"You might help in that noble endeavor."

"I'm too busy selling newspapers—to the robots who can read!"



THE JAMES COLLINS divorce trial was a big affair for Westport. The multi-millionaire,

home town manufacturer was being sued by his twenty three year old wife for half his fortune on as many grounds as her lawyers could fake up.

There is the traditional admiration of the home town boy who has made good. But below it is always the underlying envy ready to rise with vicious reaction when he fails. It was this envy, the smug contentment at the idol's downfall, that was rampant in Westport now. Myrna intended to make the utmost of it.

The plan for handling the Collins story had been laid out as Myrna wanted it. Chloe Pierdale was to do the courtroom stories. Chloe knew how to pull out all the stops on a story like this; she was a sob-sister of the old school. One of the last, and certainly one of the best east of the Mississippi.

Chloe had come in with Myrna. To San there seemed something poisonous about the very air that she breathed. He thought with pleasure of what Old Bob would have done to her.

So they were going to give Collins the works. He thought again of what Myrna had said—it takes a lot to educate a couple of kids. He didn't know anything but the newspaper business. A spot like this with the Tribune would be hard to find or work into somewhere else.

But there was far more to it than that. The Tribune was his, even if Myrna did own it. His and Old Bob Doring's.

When he reached home Georgia was feeding the kids. Their tinker toys were put away, but the five story windmill stood successfully on the piano.

"You must have driven slowly," said Georgia. "Some man has been trying to get you for the last half hour. You weren't at the office."

"It's a slow kind of a day," said San. "What did he want?"

"He left a number."

San picked up the slip and dialed. In a moment he heard a man's voice. "Hello," he said. "This is Jack Sanford calling back."

"I'm Collins. James Collins; you've had my name in your paper a good deal lately."

"Yes, Mr. Collins. What can I do for you?"

"You can have some photographers and some reporters sent over. I thought you would be interested in another scoop. I have just shot my wife."

San hung up with the feeling of being very old. He knew that Collins wasn't lying. His hand held down the phone cradle for a moment, then he dialed the police station. "Walters? Sanford of the *Tribune*. Lieutenant Harris there?"

In a moment Harris came on, and Sanford told him what Collins had said. Then he called Myrna.

"You fool!" she said, in a moment's loss of control. "What business did you have calling Harris first? You know he won't let us in now."

"Harris and I have known each other for a long time."



WITHOUT finishing dinner, he left for Collins' apartment uptown. Chloe was already there. Frank Rogers, their staff photographer, was

waiting out in the hall. He was a new kid and had never seen anything quite like this before. He was white under his jaw-line. "Harris said we could come in after the police get theirs," he said.

San nodded. "It's o.k.; Harris always lets us get our story if we play square with him."

Myrna didn't show up. San thought she might, but Chloe was soaking up all the details that would satisfy the sadism of the readers. She made a little sketch of the position of the body, Collins sitting in the chair staring at it, the gun he'd dropped on the floor.

She asked him, "Why did you do it, Mr. Collins?"

San looked at Collins, too; he didn't want to speak. They had been distant acquaintances. They had belonged to a couple of the same clubs.

Collins looked little and old in the deep chair where he sat watching the police activity with staring eyes. His hair was half way to gray. His face was thin and very white now. There were hollows in his cheeks that hadn't been there a month ago.

He seemed to see Sanford suddenly after a long time. "You'll sell a lot of newspapers in the morning, eh, San?"

Sanford went back to the office to help change the layout of the front page. There wasn't much editing to do on Chloe's copy. It came out clean and in just the style that Myrna wanted. He scarcely read it. He knew what it would say.

Myrna had been in her office ever since he'd left earlier. He took Chloe's copy in to her. "I guess this makes it even better," he said. "A murder trial ought to sell more copies than a divorce case."

Myrna's face seemed worried and tired when she looked up, the first time San could recall seeing her that way.

She shook her head. "No. We're

not going to play this up. The divorce trial would have teased the audience along; this is cut and dried. We'll give it the front page in the morning edition. Follow it after that on the inside, and work it back to a couple of inches on the back page."

Sanford stared in exasperation. "Look, will you make up your mind what you want? Collins' lawyer isn't going to let him hang without a defense; he'll drag in the juiciest scandals he can think up on the Porter girl. Or is that why you don't want to use it—? But it would sell papers."

"You try to figure it out," said Myrna a little tiredly; "if you get the right answer I'll tell you. But this gets pushed back after tomorrow morning."

"We'll start building the labor negotiations at Johnston Electronics for the front page. The electrical union is set to pull a strike, and I think they are going to it this time. It ought to be a real fight; there's been trouble down there for a long time. Maxwell handled the stories on their preliminary meetings last week, didn't he?"

"Yes. What are we going to do now? Promote a strike, or stop it?"

"We're going to sell papers, editor. Let Maxwell stay on the story; he's good at that. We'll plan a systematic series if real trouble develops."

HE WENT back to his own office. Everything was under control. Simmons, the night editor, had the front page finished. It would be on the streets in another half hour.

San turned out the light and went down the hall. At the end he paused and turned back to the comic editor's office. He entered and flipped the light on. In the file of mats he found what he was looking for. Next week's "Dragon Man" strip.

He held the sheet up to the light to cast the lettering and figures into relief and read it through. He smiled to himself. It was better than this week's. The kids would like it.

There was the approaching sound of heel taps in the hall as he read. Myrna passed the open door and glanced in. "I'll bet it's 'Dragon Man' you're reading."

"Georgia doesn't like it," said San; "she doesn't think it's good for the kids."

"She wouldn't."

He didn't bother to pick that one up. He kept his eyes on the mat, and when he looked up Myrna was gone.

He slid the mat back into the file, and wondered what it was about "Dragon Man". There was something; you couldn't be neutral about the strip.

In the hall again, he remembered the morgue file on the Johnston labor dispute. Myrna had given it to him in her office, but he had left it somewhere.

He backtracked to his own office. The envelope was not there. He tried the door of Myrna's office, then entered and turned on the light. Old Bob had never locked the door, but he wouldn't have been surprised if Myrna did. She had brought in a small, old fashioned safe which she kept in one corner of the room. What was in it, San could not imagine, nor had he ever tried to guess.

On Myrna's desk were a few scattered papers. She must have been tired of thinking of something else, San thought. Nothing was ever left lying around in her office.

He leafed through the papers and turned them over. Underneath was the envelope he was looking for. He slipped it into his pocket and replaced her papers as nearly as possible in the order they were.

A page slipped out of one of the folders. He opened the cover to replace the sheet and pat them all down in order. He had no intention of becoming interested in anything she had in there, but he stared at a page that inadvertently caught his eye.

It was littered with curlicues and hatchet marks that looked like some

strange and ancient symbolism. For an instant he tried to imagine what it would be, and then his mind went back a long way and he recalled seeing something like this just once before.

It had to do with logic—symbolic logic. That was it. He wondered what in the world Myrna was doing with such stuff. He flipped through the pages. He saw the names Metcalf, Richardson, Collins, Johnston on various pages. And one he didn't know—Kiersten.

Bewildered, San shook his head and replaced the folders and left the office. He wondered if that hokuspokus was behind her erratic management of the paper. Crystal balls would be next order of the day, he thought; Old Bob had bred himself a strange pigeon when he fathered Myrna into this world.

THE KIDS were in bed, but Georgia was sitting up listening to a Sunday evening symphony when he got home. "If you're finally ready to finish dinner, it's in the refrigerator," she said; "it will take just a minute to warm it up."

While he ate, she sat down across the kitchen table, her arms folded in front of her. He felt as if she were giving him the once over closely. She did that occasionally. It made him fidgety. He didn't look up now until he spoke. "Let's give it up; it's not worth it."

"What isn't worth it? What are you talking about?"

"The paper. It's never going to be the way it was when Old Bob was there. You've added five years to your face in the last six months; there's even some gray where the black used to be. You don't have to try to put up with Myrna for the rest of your life."

He'd known this was coming, but he wished she hadn't brought it up tonight. "There's nothing else to do!"

"You've always wanted to write—

political analysis, historical fiction—you're not getting any younger to make a try."

"We've got the kids to educate."

"They don't need anything fancy. We'll get along."

"No." He stood up and glared with an entirely unwanted anger on his face. "I'm not leaving the *Tribune* now, and I don't want to have to think about such things. I've got too many other problems trying to figure out how to keep Myrna from destroying the paper."

"Old Bob Doring is dead," said Georgia. "You can't bring him back to life no matter how loyal you are to his paper!"



A STRIKE town is an ugly thing. San had lived through it before. The Johnston plant was a big one, employing almost fifteen thousand people. He hoped it wouldn't go out.

But it did. Maxwell phoned the news Monday afternoon from the booth outside the conference room where negotiations were being held. "They start picketing at eight o'clock in the morning," he said.

"All right," said San. "Give it to the rewrite man. I'll look it over personally."

There were four editions of the *Tribune*, but Myrna would probably want an extra on this if it didn't make the evening home edition. San glanced at the clock. They might make it. He raised the phone to order the front page broken down.

There was a strange expression, half delight, half fear, in Myrna's eyes when San told her the news. "We'll play it big," she said softly. "Use the morgue stuff I gave you. Keep Maxwell on it, and get him to work the history into the current stories.

"There're a lot of old grudges that'll be brought up here."

"We're strictly on the labor side, you understand; we can work another circulation jump of six or seven per cent out of this if we're careful."

"How about the editorials? Aren't we going to try to analyze the issues and point out suggestions for settlement? We've always done that in the past," San said.

"You'll probably have to run at least a couple of editorials, but make it very general. Just hold to the line that the company is a big oppressor and it's about time they were whittled down. Let the regular news stories take the burden of the detailed argument."

San stood in the middle of the room and looked at Myrna. "I don't know where you learned your journalism, but didn't anyone mention the fact that a newspaper has an obligation to the community, an obligation to be a force for unity, for mutual understanding?"



"I've told you before it's a matter of believing, not understanding," said Myrna. "Readers will believe anything you tell them if you tell it in the right way—and in that lies the technique of journalism."

"It's the hairline difference in emphasis from day to day. What a person receives in communication one day determines much of what he is willing to absorb the next day. By feeding it out in the right doses you can push a hundred thousand people from one side to the other as easy as the wind can sway a field of ripe wheat."

"I've shown you a little of how

that can be done. You'll see it more on this story!"

He felt the difference in the town that night. On the way home, he found the business section crowded. Beside every third or fourth parking meter were little knots of men, six or seven of them, standing in close conference. Occasionally one would look furtively out from that circle as if fearful that they would be overheard.

As San drove slowly along the street, he knew that in every tight little circle the same talk was being made. The words would be a little different, but they meant the same.

There would be talk about tomorrow's meeting of the negotiators. There would be talk of what the government ought to do to protect the working men. There would be talk of getting out of this town and forever away from submission to the mastery of the corporation.

But of these last there would be few. Their words would meet with general disfavor because they stirred up desires the others preferred not to think of. They would be the first to leave the little conference, and some of them actually would go away, to Oregon, to California. But not many of them.

Along the streets the human flow eddied around these knots of conferees. Men still wore their work tans and had plant identification badges pinned to their shirt pockets. With some, their women walked by their side, and it was here you could see it, thought San. In the faces of the women.

HE STOPPED at the super market a few blocks from home to get some things that Georgia had reminded him to pick up. Scattered throughout the store were couples standing together, a market basket between them, the woman holding a list

on a white piece of paper, and both of them staring a little dumbly at that list knowing how far it might have to go.

He saw Lieutenant Harris ahead of him at the shelves. Harris lived a few blocks on the other side of the market.

"Too bad about the Johnston business," said San.

Harris nodded. "I hate these things. I'm glad we don't have more of them. We've got to cover the plant tonight. There's been a lot of ugly talk around town. Never know what might come of it."

"Anything we can get a story on?"

"Nothing definite. It would pay you to have a man and a photographer on deck if you want to be sure your dear public gets all the gory details."

He went out again after passing through the checking line. The sky was hot and heavy for Spring, and the stasis that filled the people seemed to be in the very air itself.

The streets swarmed with cars, nine-tenths of them having no place to go, San thought. Just people not knowing what to do with the sudden hoard of time on their hands, knowing that after enough of that time rations would grow short, and bills would have to go unpaid.

His weariness was almost an agony as he came into the house and put down the bag of groceries. After one look at his face, Georgia shooed the children gently away.

San felt guilty about the meal Georgia had set for him when he knew that in so many homes this night there was no contentment at mealtime, but only the beginning of an agonizing wonder about tomorrow's meals and the ones after that.

The first day of a strike was always the hardest, he supposed. After that there were compensations. No one would actually starve, maybe, but the emptiness of not knowing was almost as bad.

"What are you going to do?" said

Georgia. "Do you suppose they might ask you to help arbitrate?"

He shook his head. "They don't do that any more. The professionals come out of Washington. We aren't supposed to have sense enough to settle our own quarrels now."

"What are you going to do on the paper?"

"Sell more papers; that's all Myrna sees in the situation." He looked up with puzzled distaste on his face. "You women are supposed to be able to figure each other out. What makes Myrna tick? Can you tell me that?"

"No." Georgia shook her head. "I can't tell you. She lives in a different world than any I have ever known. She lives only to satisfy her own private purposes. I don't think a person like her should be allowed to run a newspaper."

"What was it Old Bob used to say about ink and newsprint?"

"He used to say that with a barrel of ink and a roll of paper a man could control the world; that seems to be one point at least where he and Myrna were in agreement!"

AFTER dinner San retired to the cubby hole that he referred to as his den. It was an eight by ten spare bedroom upstairs which he had lined with a few book shelves. A desk with typewriter took up the main area of the room.

He had done a lot of work here, mostly editorials, when Old Bob was alive. He hadn't touched the machine much since Myrna came.

He sat down to it now. He didn't know exactly what he was going to say or what he was going to do with it when he said it, but he started out.

I saw your faces tonight, he wrote. I saw you talking on the streets and walking lonely and stunned along the sidewalks. I saw your wives standing in front of me in the line at the super market. They were buying mostly beans and potatoes, and the things

that would go a long way when the pay check wasn't coming in any more.

I wonder if you know why things are this way. Do you know why you won't be going back to your bench or assembly line this morning? Do you know why your wife is going to have to stretch the groceries through a time they can't possibly cover? I don't think you do.

I didn't see your face among us on the streets tonight, President Andrews. You came to us only a year ago when the Corporation gave you a fine promotion and set you up as head of the great plant in our community. That makes you one of us, Bill, whether you like it or not. And I feel pretty sure you like it. We've got a good town, and it's better because you're here and because Johnston Electronics is here. I wonder if you have any idea why the shop won't open tomorrow, Bill.

I don't think you have, and I'm sure you don't want it that way any more than the rest of us do.

There will be a lot of talk around the conference table this morning. I wonder if any one can figure out one good reason why everybody can't go back to the assembly-lines and have the pay checks go on while the talks are held, and we try to figure out what we are arguing about.

San scanned it through. It was no masterpiece, but it said what he wanted to say, and he was going to say it.

He could guess what Myrna would say, but it would be in the paper before she saw it, and for once he didn't care very much what she did think about it. He put his hat on and drove out again to the office to give the piece to the night man to work into the front page.

He was in the office the next morning a few minutes ahead of Myrna. He had bought a copy of the *Tribune*

from a street boy, and his open letter looked pretty fair to him. He was reading it again when Myrna stepped in. She rested her ever-present briefcase on a chair. "I read your piece, San. It was a very nice job."

He looked up in surprise, and she let him wear that surprise while she stood smiling faintly with lowered eyelids. "You probably thought I was going to be awfully mad," she said. "I imagine you came down prepared to accept walking papers gracefully, and say goodbye to the *Tribune*."

"It isn't going to cost you that because I happen to like your piece; it fits quite well into my program. But you didn't know that; you *can't* always know it ahead of time. And so it must not happen again. Do you understand that? It must not happen again."

"And just what is your program?"

"To sell more newspapers—always."

She picked up the briefcase and went on to her own office.

At ten o'clock William Andrews called on the phone. His voice was irate and ragged. "Listen, Sanford," he said. "I don't want to see any more sloppy, gushy pieces like that one you had on the front page this morning. We're running things down here the way we see them. I'll thank you to keep your nose out of our affairs. This plant is going to stay shut down just as long as that union wants it shut down. This is one time they can bite off their noses to spite their faces without any interference from us. And I don't want any from you!"

He hung up before San said a word. San dropped the phone back into the cradle and picked up a long cigar and lit it thoughtfully. Myrna's plans—

He had just remembered that last name he had seen in her papers. Kiersten—it had irritated him. He thought he should have known it. He did; it was one he had heard Old Bob

mention a long time ago, just after the war.



ON SUNDAY afternoon again, they read "Dragon Man" and the rest of the comics. San put his heart into the reading.

"The *Tribune* is the best paper in the world, isn't it?" said Judy. "No other paper has "Dragon Man" like ours, does it?"

"Sure, "Dragon Man" goes all over the country," said San. "Kids all over the country get to enjoy him."

"Well, there's no paper like the *Tribune*, anyway," she insisted.

San was willing to agree with that. Circulation had climbed unbelievably in the last week, to a point that would have made Old Bob's eyes pop.

He scanned through the funnies again after the kids went away. He glanced through the news and feature sections. It was just right; Myrna had done something, and he couldn't figure out what it was.

Little of the styling and layout had been changed. It was the choice of contents; they balanced. Something for everybody in the family. It was the best-balanced Sunday edition they had ever put out. Beside it, their rival, the *Clarion*, looked like a clumsy country sheet.

The strike continued. Maxwell had a masterly summary of the issues on the front page. He was accurate, yet with Myrna's guidance he had skillfully made it appear that the company was wholly at fault in opposing the lily-pure union.

The city had grown uneasy, like some huge animal waiting for something it feared but could not name. The streets were more deserted now. The people seemed waiting—almost hiding—behind the walls of their houses. But in the whole city there

was a feeling—and San could not have told how he discerned it—that this couldn't go on. It didn't.

That night the thin, placid surface of the town broke like a cracking layer of ash on a molten stream of lava. At the union hall a gang attack flared up. The building was set afire.

San heard the sirens and called the office to find out about it. It seemed like the thing he had been waiting for. He had known somehow that it was coming. He had felt it. And suddenly he recognized where he had first felt it—in Myrna. She had been the first to know!

He dressed and went down to the office despite Georgia's protests. There wasn't much he could do. Films of the riot and the fire were in the dark room when he got there. Maxwell and a couple of the other boys were on the scene phoning reports every ten or fifteen minutes to the rewrite desk.

San stood in his own office with the lights out while he watched from the window. He could see the glare of the union hall fire and the shrouds of smoke it was weaving over the city.

Then in the distance he thought he heard a sharp sound, one that he didn't want to believe. He refused to believe it, but in a moment confirmation came.

Holliday, the night editor rang him on the phone. "A man's been killed at union hall!"

He went back to the window, and his vision of the city was changed. A man had been killed down there. It was his city, and while it had become inflamed to the point of murder he had stood by and done nothing but sell newspapers.

He had gone as far as he could go with Myrna Doring.

Old Bob had never studied journalism in college, but he understood it as communication in the highest sense of the word. San had learned from Old Bob, but tonight for the first time he understood the full meaning of the things he had learned.

Myrna had learned nothing, either from Old Bob or from whatever school of journalism she must have attended. She knew nothing of the heavy obligation carried by a man who controls communication between his fellows.

Somewhere she had picked up, evidently, some high-powered hokuspokus that helped sell papers. Kiersten—San remembered that Old Bob had called the man a crack pot.

He sat down at his typewriter and began slowly pecking out the beginnings of another front page editorial. This one wouldn't fit with any one of Myrna's plans. He was very sure of that. But he had to give her one more chance.

He wrote until near midnight and left the piece in her office with a note for the early edition.

THE RIOTING had quieted when he drove back through the streets. He passed the smoking, steaming wreck of union hall where the firemen were packing their hoses again. White and black police cars swept the streets—he was halted twice in town.

Everywhere the smoke and steam fog had lowered like a black curtain trying to hide the shame of Westport. But it couldn't hide anything, not the hate and terror that murder brought and left flowing up and down the streets between the houses like a black river that was felt but not seen.

He went home and slept until mid morning. He got up irritably after a glance at the clock. "Why didn't you call me?" he growled at Georgia.

"You didn't tell me you wanted to get up at any particular time, and you didn't set the alarm. You needed the sleep, anyway."

The fog hung in late, still trapping the smoke of the fire. The streets had a hush about them, that made him glance about involuntarily and keep his eye on the rear view mirror as he drove. This was his city now, and he had helped make it what it was!

He checked the previous editions at the office and went into Myrna. "You didn't use my editorial," he said.

She looked up in annoyance. "No; it wouldn't fit. I told you not to do that again, San."

"I'll be leaving," he said. "I can't work for the *Tribune* any more. I'm not your kind of newsman, Myrna; I guess I'm more interested in building communication within the community than I am in selling papers."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm not sure. I've been thinking maybe I can make a deal with the *Clarion*. They need a lift over there. They're kind of old style, like Old Bob was, but they haven't got the savvy he had. Maybe I can get on as editorial assistant to start. Maybe a leg man, even. It wouldn't be too bad—a lot better than this."

"I see. When are you planning to leave?"

"As of now. I'm through with your kind of journalism."

"You ought to give me two weeks; I need you, San."

He gave a short laugh. "What for? I haven't been anything but a figure-head since you came."

"I'll need you tonight. Harris called before you came in. He said he didn't want us to get in the way tonight."

"Why? What was he talking about?"

"He's afraid something bigger is about to break. The union hall fire isn't the last. I wish you'd stick around until the strike ends, at least."

There was a kind of pleading in her eyes that was unfamiliar and totally unexpected. For a minute he had the impression that she was terribly afraid, and he wanted to help her—because of Old Bob Doring, and because of herself.

But he knew that if he gave in it would be too late; it might be forever too late.

"I'll be cleaning out my office this afternoon," he said.

"Come in just before you go, anyway."

IT WOULDN'T have taken long to gather his personal things and reassign his present editorial projects. But he made no hurry to begin. He sat down at his desk. It was going to be more painful than he thought. Everything in the room spoke of Old Bob and whispered that he was deserting, that Old Bob would have expected him to stay and see it through—that Myrna herself was Old Bob's own, and he couldn't desert one of them without the other.

He opened the drawers and slammed them shut again, one after another. He could leave all the junk, if he wanted to. He ought to simply put on his hat and walk out. But he didn't.

In the middle of the afternoon, he felt a sudden whip of turmoil that stung through the outer offices. He put his head out the door and called down to a passing rewrite man.

"What is it? What's going on?"

"The Johnston plant. Ten minutes ago—a mob attacked. The craziest thing you ever heard. Like a full scale war. Every cop in town is out. They'll probably have the militia or the National Guard by night."

San whirled back to the windows of his office. As he did so he heard the sudden ugly sound of distant gunfire and the wail of sirens through the city streets. To the north, where the plant lay, a small plume of smoke was coming from somewhere.

It couldn't be happening, he told himself numbly. On impulse, he reached for the phone and called Georgia. "Take the kids and take the train for Point View," he said. "Don't bother with packing. You've just got time to get a taxi and make the 6:54. I want you out of town."

"San—"

"Don't argue, please, Georgia. Just do it!"

He went into Myrna's office, and she was watching from the window, too. For just an instant, they almost forgot the differences between them. "It's like a war," she said.

"Multiply it by a thousand and it would be—and maybe that would be even better from the standpoint of newspaper sales—"

They listened to the radio in her office. The mayor came on in a plea for sanity, but the rioting only increased. It seemed that not only strikers, but hundreds of other citizens with no concern in the dispute were taking part on one side or the other.

Myrna turned away from the window and took up the phone. She switched into the interphone that covered the whole plant. "There will be no edition of the paper tonight or until further notice. All employees are requested to go home and return only when called."



Throughout the plant there was a moment's lull while the employees stared at each other. It made no sense; they should be among the last to leave their duties—the rioting was not that much of a threat. But they went in response to Myrna's orders, leaving the building empty like a stream of hive creatures abandoning their cells before disaster.

"What was that for?" San demanded. "Why don't we put out a paper tonight? We could sell a million copies—!"

"I've got something to show you, San."



MYRNA WENT to the corner of the office and stopped before the little safe. She twirled the dial and took out a sheaf of manila envelopes and file folders. San thought he recognized those that she had forgotten on her desk that night.

"I haven't very long to tell you this. Maybe you won't like what I say, but please don't argue with me now. Did you ever hear my father mention Dr. Alfred Kiersten?"

He remembered all of it now. "There was something about meeting a crack pot by that name during his stint with OWI during the war."

Myrna nodded. "That's where Dad met him. I didn't know about their meeting until I ran into his name elsewhere; I never met him, personally. Dad said the government kept him on only because he could use words like magic. He could write a story that would make a Nazi general weep if he wanted to."

"What about him?" said San impatiently. "What's that got to do with this?" He gestured towards the window where the fires at the plant were growing brighter than the setting sun.

Myrna followed his glance and was silent a moment. "Kiersten—and I—" she said, "are responsible for what you see out there."

"What are you talking about?"

"I want to tell you about myself, first. You remember how Dad wanted me to go into newspaper work when I was a kid around here. He thought if I absorbed ink in the shop I would never get it out of my system.

"He was more right than he knew, but he was disappointed when I wanted college after high-school. He said I could learn everything right here, and when he was gone I could take over;

he was probably right in his own way.

"I was interested in far more than the narrow scope of the business of finding news and printing papers. He had only a fragment of the field of man's communication with man; I wanted the whole field. That's why I went away. But I always knew the ideals and traditions he had were fine and good and he made the *Tribune* a great force in Westport for better understanding."

"Then why did you change all that," said San, "merely to sell newspapers?"

"I didn't; I was doing something else. I told you I wanted to know the whole field of communication between men. I tried to find out why men misunderstand each other, why they willingly believe lies instead of truth. I wanted to find out how communication could be improved."

"And you found it, I suppose! And sacrificed men like Collins and Richardson, and puffed this Johnston dispute to violence. Is that the way to promote understanding?"

"I didn't say that I found it," said Myrna wearily. "I found something totally different; I found Alfred Kiersten. His work, at least. He was dead by the time I heard his name.

"For my doctorate thesis—you didn't know I was Dr. Myrna Doring, did you?—For my doctorate I made a study of propaganda—the distortion of truth, and the methodical manufacture of lies. That's how I encountered Kiersten's work."

THERE WAS a haunted expression in her eyes as she continued. "He was an Englishman. He had been here for a long time before the war teaching semantics and symbolic logic at a small university. When the war broke out he approached the Allied leaders with a theory he had developed.

"He told them that by controlling the population of a nation you could control its armies. And he told them that he had the means of controlling the populations of any country as if

they were no more than puppets on strings.

"Perhaps his claims were too broad. But he tried to promote his work vigorously; he succeeded only in making it sound fantastic. He was finally laughed out of military intelligence offices of every Allied nation. He wound up working in a two-bit OWI job at a desk next to Dad. A year after the war ended, he died alone."

San listened quietly, shifting his evaluations of Myrna while she talked. Dr. Doring. He hadn't known about her degree.

Her voice had been growing husky while she talked. "I found an original thesis of Kiersten's in the college library while working on my own. That led me to the tracing down of all his work. Other papers were in obscure journals, but I found what I believed to be all his original work in an abandoned trunk in a storage warehouse.

"His work was summarized in a series called Kiersten's Equations. Do you know what symbolic logic is, San?"

"Hocus-pokus done with curlicues is all I know about it."

"Kiersten's Equations were in terms of symbolic logic. They show exactly how a given mass of population will react, or can be made to react, under a tremendous variety of circumstances. He showed the necessary elements of communication to a population in order to make it react in a pre-determined manner.

"I don't know whether you understand the importance of this or not, San. 'Propaganda' is a word that has been with us for a long time; it's a loose way of saying that you are going to tell a man a lie and make him believe it. Kiersten showed how it could be done with incredible precision."

"Then why was he laughed away during the war?"

"That's something that will be forever to the discredit of the officers he approached," said Myrna. "It's not

the first time such a thing has happened—nor will it be the last.

"Unfortunately, all Kiersten's work was done with the negative roots of the equations, as he termed them—the roots which produced fear, hate, and violence. But he knew that positive roots must exist—by which men could be induced to love and cooperation. He died before he carried out any investigation there.

"I am not qualified to work them out, either; I can barely follow him as far as he went. But I *can* do that."

"And so, I am to believe that our present turmoil in Westport is due to your careful planning, the running of this newspaper along the lines of Kiersten's Equations?"

"Yes; that's what I have done. You think you know what a force a newspaper can be in a community? You don't know a fraction of it! It's the most powerful communication-medium we have ever known. Radio and television are feeble beside a well managed newspaper.

"It hits them all, everyone in the family. The kids grab the funnies; the husband takes the front section or the sports; his wife goes for the second section with local news and women's features.

"On a mass basis, you can produce any kind of negative result you want. Leave the kids unhappy about the state of 'Dragon Man'—let them feel he's let them down. You didn't know that's what was actually happening, did you? But Georgia caught it.

"In the lovelorn column, you depress the women with the letters about unhappy romance. You defeat father with the constant pounding of perilous world news.

"Sure, this is the common substance of news communication. But when you know how to do it with the unerring rapier skill of Kiersten's Equations, you never miss; the populace goes constantly down into mass depression or rage at a given target. You saw it work; you know how I ordered the

material shaded for maximum effect."

"All for the benefit of humanity!" San exclaimed savagely. "Will you tell me, in Heaven's name, what was it for?"

SHE GLANCED toward the window where the distant fires were brighter against the encroaching evening. "Don't you see? If the Kiersten Equations are right, they represent one of the greatest developments of the age? A far greater force than any discovered by the atomic physicists!"

"If you can understand that, you can understand me. I *had* to know the truth about the Kiersten Equations. I had to know, because Kiersten said they were already in use *elsewhere*—and I believed him.

"I tell you that somebody knows those principles; they *are* being used—against us. Every day, new thousands become our enemies; we pour out our wealth in bewilderment that we can't make friends or buy allies.

"You know this is true; you see it on the wires. From Cairo, from Teheran, from Calcutta, Tokyo, Cape Town. The whole world is being swept by the principles that Kiersten begged and pleaded the Allied leaders to accept. Look at the map; we are being pushed back until we'll soon be a mere island in a world swarming against us.

"It's no wonder they haven't been overly concerned about our atom-bombs, they have a weapon ten thousand times as potent—an understanding of how to tell a man a lie and make him believe it with all his heart!"

She clutched his arm and he felt her fingers digging into his flesh. "San, do you understand, now, why the Kiersten Equations had to be tested? Do you understand why I had to do it?"

"They work! With only this newspaper as a weapon, I have turned an American city into a hell of hate. It has been done before—by random,

haphazard methods—but never so precisely as I have done it, nor so quickly. It could be done in any or all towns the country over.

"I had to show that the equations worked, because they were already working—against us—in nearly every country of the world!"

He put his arm around her, and her head went down on his shoulder, and she began sobbing. The grief of past months poured out of her.

San felt his own eyes moisten. This was Old Bob's little pigtailed kid again, climbing on the rolls of newspaper, making the linotype men nervous while she stood chewing gum in their ears.

"Do you think I wanted this?" she said. "Do you know what it feels like to take the responsibility of experimenting with the lives of a hundred thousand people? But *someone had to prove Kiersten right or wrong. And I proved he was right.*"



SAN HELD her while the sound of rioting grew louder as if it were drawing closer. He knew that what she said was true; you could sense it in the words that came out of Europe and Africa and Asia. He could understand why no one would fear the atom bomb when they could wield the force of Kiersten's Equations.

"What will you do?" he said softly. "How can you expect to convince them, even now, when you have to claim responsibility for this in order to do it? Didn't you think of anything beyond this point?"

She drew away from him and dried her eyes. She lifted her head at the sound of nearing confusion in the streets. "I thought of it all," she said quickly. She gathered up the papers

she had taken from the safe. "It's all here; no one can deny it who can understand the manipulations of Kiersten's symbolic logic. The facts are inescapable."

In the distance another flare streaked against the night.

"I think we better get out of here," said San. "The mob looks like it's coming this way. Do you suppose—?"

"Take these," Myrna said urgently. She handed him the locked briefcase with the papers inside. "Tomorrow—or as soon as the riot is over—go to Professor Andrew Lollar of Columbia. He knows me; he was my advisor on my doctorate. Tell him all you've seen and all I've told you. Get him to read the papers. He will, and he will understand and help you; I've explained fully what I want done."

"But where will you be? What's going to happen to you?"

"I'll be all right. Now hurry—before the mob closes the streets."

He glanced out the window and his entire body went cold. A writhing human stream was flowing toward the *Tribune* building.

"You're coming now!" he said.

She pushed him away. "No, San. I've got to stay. You don't understand; there's a certain point in the insanity of a mob like that when they've got to have—*somebody*. Afterwards, they disperse quickly, but if it doesn't come to a climax they'll wreck the city. I've done all I started out to do. Take the papers and go to Lollar. Quickly, San!"

With the briefcase in one hand he scooped her up in his arms and ran down the hall. The self-service elevator for use of the paper personnel was still in operation. He carried her into it.

"All right," she said. "I'll go with you; put me down." Her voice was almost inaudible. "It's going to be too late if you delay over me; perhaps it is already."

"We'll take our own cars. One of us will have to get through. Head

west over the bridge. The rioters are concentrated between here and the Johnston plant; you follow behind me."

THEY WERE breaking in the big glass doors at the front of the building when San and Myrna came out of the darkened shipping dock doors. The parking lot was clear.

As he and Myrna got their cars into motion he heard the mob cries behind them. Someone fired a shot. Myrna wheeled out of the lot with squealing tires and turned on Main.

San followed. He had been a fool to let her go alone, he thought, but she was right—the information had to get out; he knew that it did.

The street was virtually deserted, and almost dark—lights had been shot out by the rioters. Myrna's car moved swiftly ahead of him. He wondered if she were trying to lose him; his speedometer touched seventy five and her convertible remained three blocks ahead.

Then, as if a hand had raised a toy automobile, he saw her yellow car twist into the air. Its front end rose first and then it rolled sidewise over and over until it stopped against a building. A spurt of fire gushed up.

She had hit a darkened road-block. His brakes squealing, San glimpsed figures that sprang up about it, and heard the sound of shots. They were not police figures.

He twisted the steering wheel hard at the intersection ahead of the block, and hurtled through a darkened, narrow street that led to the waterfront highway. He had no way of knowing whether this road was blocked, but doubted that the mobbers had encompassed the whole area.

Forever after, he would wonder, San thought, why he had turned aside. But he knew. He knew that Myrna was dead; she had planned it that way. Back at the newspaper office she had intended to turn herself over to the mob. He was glad it hadn't


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WE ARE ALONE

By Robert Sheckley

**They came not as conqueror or pil-
ferers, but seekers of companionable
intelligences . . .**

 **H**AD THE LAND-
ING been on Earth,
or any of the plan-
ets of Sol system,
Magglio would have
guided the ship
down with studied,
offhand ease. But
since they were out
in the big, unknown
galaxy, somewhere around Altair, he
gripped the throttle in a bonecrushing

embrace, ready to pour on the power
if anything happened. Anything—
what?

Perspiration poured down his thin,
tight face as he remembered the
spaceman's legends he had laughed
at. Mirage-planets, where landing dis-
tances are dangerously deceptive; liv-
ing planets, planets of death. It didn't
ease his mind any to know that none
of these wonders had ever been dis-
covered, since theirs was the first ship

to venture into interstellar space. Such might be there—and that was enough.

Salzman, the navigator, was trying the impossible stunt of reading six dials with one eye, while focusing the other on the red planet rushing up to meet them. He had a hand on the auxiliary power control, in case something happened to the main drive—or to Magglio. If he had had a third eye, it would have been watching Oliver, the engineer.

Oliver was manning the big atomic cannon, in case of attack. He had it centered on the planet, all safeties off, and his finger was dangerously taut on the instigator-switch. He had partially convinced himself, during the last few days, that an alien space armada was waiting for them, hovering just out of sight around the curve of the planet. Should he fire, just in hopes of scaring them off?

As they came nearer, Salzman could make out the rolling contour of the land; the red of the planet resolved itself into a forest of pink, red and purple. Scattered through the forest were black dots which grew into towns and villages as they screamed down through the thickening atmosphere. He noted their positions automatically; he was still too busy reading dials for them to register properly on his consciousness.

Magglio had perspiration in his right eye, but he didn't dare release a control to wipe it, or even to blink. The surface of the planet was looming beneath them, stretched as far as he could see. Perhaps it would split into a gigantic mouth, like the kid-derers on Pluto-base always said. Or perhaps—he tightened at the controls, waiting for something to happen.

The ship screamed through the atmosphere as it decelerated—

—but on the whole it was an uneventful landing.

Magglio regained control of himself, found an open patch and set the ship down in an elegant skid. Oliver talked himself out of his fears long

enough to switch the cannon over to safety. Shakily, Salzman raised his hand and looked at the imprint of the throttle across his palm. It was all right, no hordes of attackers, no monsters—yet; no seventy-foot dragons or green-eyed ghouls. Only the red forest, a trifle singed where the ship ploughed across the treetops, but still peaceful.

After a moment's silence they began pounding each other on the back, shouting from sheer release of anxiety. Salzman picked up little Magglio, grinned in his face, and tossed him to Oliver. The engineer grunted when he caught him, looked puzzled for a moment, then decided his dignity was shot for the rest of the trip anyhow, and tossed him back to Salzman.

"Easy, you apes," Magglio said, regaining his feet and smoothing back his hair, "or I'll turn you over to the Ufangies."

SALZMAN mussed the pilot's hair again, grinning. He knew all about the Ufangies. They were a tribe of orange and black flying reptiles with fins for underwater work, who subsisted solely on human eyeballs.

They were also an interesting example of legend-making, a part of the complex 'natural' history of space. The first men on Mars had been disappointed at not finding any intelligent life, so they spun yarns about Visties and Serbens, and scared grown men with tales of what was lurking on the Jovian moons. The Jovian explorers didn't find any intelligence either—monstrous or human—so they added the eyeball-eating Ufangies, and pushed them to Saturn.

Now that the solar system was Earth's backyard—albeit a wild and lonely one—the horrors had supposedly fled to deep space. They might, the stories ran, be lurking anywhere, ready to pounce upon the unwary spaceman.

Salzman wondered just how much

Magglio believed in the things; he knew that the pilot wore a little charm on his wrist specifically designed to ward off aliens. Or, for that matter, how much Oliver believed in the hordes of attackers waiting to blast their ship.

Or how much he himself believed in them. Salzman realized that he wasn't immune, even though he knew that, in essence, all the stories said the same thing—there *is* intelligent life out there, just a bit farther than we've gone. That, he knew, was Earth's hope. *Any* sort of intelligence, just so that we're not alone in the immensity of space.

They had landed early in the morning, and by the time they were organized for land reconnaissance it was noon. Salzman and Oliver finished the last of the atmosphere tests, while Magglio read a comic-book he had smuggled on board.

"It's O.K.," Salzman said, squeezing into the operating chamber. "Breathable, without enough deviation from Earth-normal to matter. Anyone show up?"

Magglio shook his head. He had been watching the front vision plate for any sign of curious natives.

"Then we'll visit them. Full armor, sidearms, breather and radio."

"Who you gonna talk to on the radio?" Magglio asked, then immediately said, "Oh, no!"

"Yes," Salzman replied, smiling pleasantly as he unpacked a blaster. "You'll cover us."

"No," Magglio said. "I wanna explore. I'm a hero too, see?"

"No," Salzman said, and that ended it. "I'll take you out tomorrow, if everything goes right. But now—full security."



Salzman and Oliver moved out through the hatch and climbed down the ladder curving around the side of the ship. Oliver was first; he put his foot down gingerly, half expecting the

earth to open up under it, even though the sap was resting solidly enough.

When they were both on the ground they waved to Magglio, and moved toward the forest. They were breathing the air of the planet, but aside from their faces, they were completely enclosed in light, radiation-proof armor.

"Let me lead," Salzman said to Oliver. The engineer was fingering his sidearm nervously as they approached the forest. Following the rough direction he had noticed from the air, Salzman started toward the nearest town.

In the forest both men were prepared for any eventuality. Oliver kept his hand on the butt of his blaster, preparing himself for savages to come swarming out from behind the trees. Salzman, with more imagination, was ready for things to come dropping out of the sky, thrusting through the ground, materializing suddenly out of thin air, and a dozen other possibilities, simultaneously or one by one.

The wind rustled the red branches; nothing happened.

THE TOWN turned out to be a small village, and a silent one. Its wide, stone-paved streets were bare. Not an animal showed itself, not a bird flew overhead. Weapons ready, the two men explored one of the houses. It was built of white stone and pink woods, and showed a high degree of craftsmanship. Within there were chairs and couches, tables and stands.

"They must be humans!" Oliver cried, when the shape of the furniture struck him. He started to sit down, then leaped up. "Might be booby trapped," he muttered eyeing the chair accusingly.

"It would be more logical to booby trap the doorway," Salzman commented. He lowered himself into the chair. Oliver released his breath when it didn't explode.

"Built for something about our size," he said. Suddenly, irrationally, he felt like Goldilocks, sitting in the little bear's chair—the one that fitted just right. He laughed out loud, but didn't bother explaining to Oliver. The literal-minded engineer would think he had cracked up.

They walked to the next room, separated by an arched doorway, and stopped short. On the walls were paintings—with human subjects!

"Oh brother!" Oliver shouted. "They *are* human! Humans!" He slapped Salzman on the back so hard he almost stumbled into a wall.

"But where in hell are they?" Salzman asked, moving quickly from painting to painting. The subjects were blondes, brunettes and redheads, male and female. They seemed entirely human, except for a pale, ethereal look that could have been the artist's technique.

They hurried on through the house, barely noting the other rooms. Urns, garments, vases, writing instruments, all would be of interest later. Right now they wanted to find people.

In the rear of the house they found a kitchen, with food still hot. The wood fire beneath the pots was smouldering feebly. "Someone sure left in a hurry," Salzman said.

Quickly they searched five more houses, and found them about the same. Some of the others were less orderly. Clothes were strewn around, sandals left in the middle of rooms. In two houses food had been spilled over the floor.

"They left in a *hell* of a hurry," Oliver said finally, as they stood in the street.

"That's for sure," Salzman said. He pushed back his hood and scratched his blond, balding head. He wasn't sure what to do next. His orders from the Foundation had been general. To survey the planets of a number of G-76 suns, in a specific sector, looking for Earth-type planets. If he found an inhabited one, to make contact with the natives if possible,

and if they could be approached peacefully.

He wasn't sure if this constituted unpeaceful behavior or not. Oliver trailed behind him as he walked slowly up the street, wondering why the inhabitants could have fled.

"I suppose they fled because of us," Oliver said, paralleling his trend of thought.

"Probably. These people are civilized, but not necessarily sophisticated. Who knows what they thought when they saw this ball of fire appear in the skies? The devil descending to the earth, perhaps."

"That's by *our* standards," Oliver objected, "how do we know they have superstitions of that sort?"

"We don't. But they're similar to us in development, which argues a like nervous system. Like inventions argue a like mentality. I know that's dubious, but I'll keep it for a working hypothesis until I find something better."

"I wonder why they didn't leave a rear-guard," Oliver mused. "Or arrange an ambush of some sort. Just leaving their homes that way... Well, now what?"

"We track them," Salzman said, coming to a decision. "We show them what we look like. We make peaceful gestures, and try to get them to talk."

Oliver nodded, and they started to the other end of the village.

THE UNDERBRUSH was trampled and torn, showing the direction in which the exodus had gone. They had no trouble following it; it was big enough to have been made by a bulldozer. On the way, Salzman called Magglio and brought him up to date.

"If you capture a small blonde," Magglio told them, his voice crackly in the earphones, "throw her over your shoulder and bring her back to me. But if they're a tribe of twenty-foot Serbens, remember, I warned you!"

"Right," Salzman said cheerfully, and signed off.

As they moved through the forest, something kept nagging at Salzman's mind, bothering him. He looked around at the big, silent red trees, the slightly waving branches. Nothing wrong there. But the feeling continued, just beyond recognition. He glanced at Oliver. The big engineer was plodding along beside him, kicking up dirt with his boots. He couldn't quite put his finger on it—and then he had it.

"Notice something funny?" he asked Oliver.

"What?" Oliver said, feeling automatically for his blaster.

"No animals. No birds. No nothing."

"Perhaps they haven't evolved," Oliver said, after due thought.

"They must have," Salzman told him. "The humans and plants can't be the only things on this planet. Nature was never *that* selective."

"They're hiding, then. Timid, like people."

Salzman nodded, but that didn't seem to cover it. The forest was too quiet; it seemed to be waiting for something to happen. His imagination started to play tricks on him again, weaving fantastic but plausible reasons for everything. Perhaps the forest is one big entity, he thought, and the animals and humans are symbiotes. Nuts, he told himself. Why did they build villages then?

They walked on, sweating copiously inside their plastic armor, following the spoor of the villagers. In an hour they were out of one part of the forest, following the trail across a narrow valley. It tightened, climbing between stubby mountains, heading steadily up. Both men were winded, but they pushed on. Finally they rounded a bend in the trail and found themselves facing a blockade. It was made of piled branches and rocks, and stood about twelve feet high. On either side of it were smooth, towering boulders.

"We could blast it down," Oliver said.

"Hmm." Salzman touched the nearest boulder wall, then glanced at the sun. It was low on the horizon, and long shadows were stretching across the red land.

"Too late." He flicked on his radio. "Magglio?"

"Yeah?"

"Haul out the scouter and bring us in. No blondes today." He signed off and turned to Oliver. "We'll try another village tomorrow. I don't think it'll be too hard to find *some-one*."

Five days later, Salzman decided he had been too optimistic. With the scouter rocket-plane they covered every village and town in a fifty mile radius—a total of twelve. In each, it was the same. Deserted streets, empty houses—with still-burning fires to show that the natives had detected them minutes before they arrived. By air they caught tantalizing glimpses of human shapes, diving into concealment in the red forest. When they landed, even the glimpse was gone.

On the fourth day they returned to the first village. It showed unmistakable signs of having been inhabited while they were away. But again, the natives had managed to find out just when they were coming, and to get out perhaps half an hour before the Earthmen arrived.

The remaining hours of the fourth day were spent in the village, looking for some sign of electrical equipment. It seemed that the natives had some system of keeping informed on their exact movements, almost down to the minute. But the only mechanical device in the village was a wheel. Smoke signals and drums were obviously out. Magglio suggested carrier pigeons, but they still hadn't seen any birds.

Before sunrise on the fifth day they took the scouter to the far side

of the continent. Oliver estimated they covered four thousand miles in something like five and a half hours. They roared down to a village full-jet, decelerating so rapidly in the last few hundred feet that they were almost plastered against the scout's walls. All in all, from the time they appeared as a dot in the sky to the time they landed in the middle of the village, not more than three minutes could have elapsed.

But the natives had had their usual fifteen-minute-plus head start.

THEY DIDN'T stop to figure out how, this time. In line with a plan they had arranged the night before, Salzman and Oliver set out after the trail of the fleeing natives. Magglio took the scout up again and circled around, trying to spot the bunch.

"They're about a mile and a half ahead," Magglio's voice said, sharp in the earphones. "Bear a little more right—that's good!"

Salzman grunted as he climbed the mountain slope. He paused on a ledge and gave Oliver a hand up. The weeks in free-fall hadn't been very good for their muscles, he thought. In the sky he could see the little scouter Magglio was piloting, hovering overhead. Stretched beneath them was red forest, broken here and there by ragged mountains.

"They're still going in a straight line," Magglio told them. "A couple hundred of them, heading toward another section of forest."

The two men moved on. It seemed to Salzman that two grown men should be able to move faster than an entire village—with old men and women, and children. But they seemed unable to overtake the natives, or even come close.

"Hey chief," Magglio radioed. "I spotted a way you can cut them off. Take a right at the next cut—"

Another hour passed as they labored through the winding shortcut. Magglio's ship hovered overhead,

careful not to give away their position. The sun beat down on the plastic as they scrambled over rocks and between trees.

"This is a hell of a note," Oliver grumbled. He had run out of swear words, having called the natives everything he could think of—except human beings. "I could have stayed in Montana and done this. My lord, we push a tin can across sixteen light years of space, just to find someone not from Earth to talk to. We just went to be friends, and this suspicious bunch of—"

"Hey chief," Magglio called. "They must have spotted you! They're bearing away again, relative to your position!"

"Spotted us!" Salzman shouted into the earphone. "Again? How could they?"

"I don't know," Magglio's voice said in his ears. "I can swear not a person has left the main bunch."

"You sure there aren't a few of them you can't see?" Salzman asked, sitting down on the ground.

"Sure as sure," Magglio told him. "The forest is thin around here. I could spot a cat. As far as I... Chief, are you and Oliver sitting down?"

"Yes, why?"

"Because the whole bunch of them sat down a moment ago!" Magglio said.

Salzman jumped to his feet, pulled Oliver up, and started again on a run.

"They just got up again," Magglio told them. "They're running—now they've stopped—they're sitting again."

Salzman had sat down again.

"That ties it," he said to Oliver in a quiet voice. "Either they've got scanners built into every tree—or they're telepathic!"

Magglio picked them up in the scouter and brought them back to the ship. Oliver sat quietly, looking as though his best friend had kicked him in the teeth. Salzman was cursing steadily, beating one fist into his thigh. It was all he could do to keep

from hitting Oliver or Magglio. To come so far, and find a pack of telepathic rabbits masquerading as human beings!

By the time they reached the ship he had regained his calm completely. He was determined to keep it from now on, no matter what happened. The trees could start running away, he felt, and he wouldn't be surprised any more.

AFTER SUPPER that evening the three men stretched out on the purple grass around the ship. They had discarded the plastic armor, since there was nothing to arm against, but kept their blasters as a safety measure.

"I noticed something else," Magglio told them. "I saw what looked like animals—they bolted like mad too, whenever you came inside of about a mile or two of them. Also a few birds. Not a living thing stayed less than a mile away."

"Everything's probably telepathic on this planet," Salzman said. "It ties in. But if they're telepathic—if they can read our minds—then why do they run? They know we're just here to establish communication." He paused. "Have you been thinking about their women?" he accused Magglio.

"Who me?" Magglio was highly indignant. "Not on your life. I been thinking about my girlfriend at home; I'm faithful, see?"

"If they can read our minds," Salzman went on, more to himself than to the others, "then they know we want to be friends. We're not here to colonize, we're not going to rob them—since we can't carry five pounds extra weight on the ship. We're here, damn it, to bridge the gap between the stars. To talk. What's wrong with them?"

"Maybe they just want to be left alone," Oliver offered.

"Then why run? Why not ignore us? No, I think they must be afraid of something."

"Monsters," Magglio said.

"I thought of that—but not if they can read our minds. We're not angels, but our intentions *are* good." Salzman remained deep in thought, his head bent forward on his chest.

"Tomorrow," he said at last, "we're rounding up a native. I hadn't thought of the telepathy angle before, but I think this'll work." Briefly, he told them what they were to do.

"Now go to bed," he finished shortly.

In his bunk, Salzman tried to fit the pieces together. It was no use. But he was sure he could clear it up tomorrow. Once they could talk to the natives... Intelligent life! That was the important thing. He had been excited by the idea since childhood; otherwise he wouldn't be out in space, spending his manhood in a metal spheroid.

Sleep wouldn't come at once. Salzman rolled and tossed for an hour or more, trying to get comfortable. Finally he dozed off fitfully, thinking of Serbens and Visties, Magglio's Ufangies and Oliver's hordes of aliens.

He was in the forest. Only it had altered. Instead of the soft reds, pinks and purples of the day, everything was a bloody crimson. Blood dripped from the leaves, and the roots and branches oozed blood. He was being chased, by a horrible mangled thing that screamed and moaned and crashed through the underbrush after him, now racing upright on two legs, now down on all fours like a dog, and constantly coming closer, until—he awoke, cursing.

"What's up?" Oliver asked, from the next bunk.

"Nightmare," Salzman answered. "Overexcited, I guess." It annoyed him. It was his first dream in years, and his first nightmare since child-

hood. Were Magglio's monster stories getting him down, he wondered?

Finally sleep came again.

THE NEXT morning was as hot as the previous ones. The men piled into the scouter quickly.

"Think pleasant thoughts," Magglio reminded them mockingly, as he poured on the jets. "Think about having a pint of beer with the chief's daughter. If they've got a chief, and if he's got beer and a daughter."

"No wonder they're running, if they're reading *your* thoughts," Oliver said. Magglio grinned and winked.

Salzman watched the red forest pass beneath them, they sped toward the area he had selected. He wondered what he would say when they rounded a native up. What right had they, to force these people out of their homes, run them through the woods like foxes, track them down and make them talk?

What right, he asked himself—plenty of right! They had crossed sixteen light years of space to make contact with intelligent life. All Earth was waiting to hear the results of their mission. They had given their lives to the job, as a lab of love. What right—why, the right of intelligence—to make contact with other intelligences, to exchange information to better both races.

And the silly fools ran like stampeded cattle, he thought bitterly. Wasn't there a brave man among them?

"Here we are," Magglio said as they shot over a village. "And there they are."

"Let's round them up," Salzman said tightly.

The scouter dipped over the tree-tops, then swung low over the natives. They were running in blind panic, and Salzman could see that the men were racing ahead of the women and children, in a hysterical effort to escape.

"Land Oliver in front of them," Salzman said. The scouter passed the

crowd, and, a few hundred yards further, Oliver parachuted out.

Immediately the natives reversed, and started in the opposite direction.

"Now me on the flank!" Salzman said. He parachuted out. Spilling air out of his chute he landed in a clear space. Quickly he checked the harness and started forward.

"I'm landing on the other side," Magglio said over the earphones. "We've got them on three sides, and they've got a sheer wall to their backs." This was the maneuver they had planned at night. The scouter dipped and swung, herding the natives like sheep. Salzman ran, tearing his way through the underbrush, toward the crowd. He could hear them, panting and moaning, only a few hundred yards ahead.

As he ran he cleared his sidearm—just in case.

Suddenly he came to an abrupt halt.

"Oliver—Magglio—over to me!" he called over the radio. "One of them's coming!"

The native staggered toward Salzman, slipping and falling, and picking himself up again. He didn't resemble any of the portraits—not now. As he got closer, Salzman could see that the man's face was twisted and contorted; his body was jerking uncontrollably, in a series of nerve and muscle spasms that threatened to tear his bones apart. His skin was pallid and splotched in spots, cancerous looking. He resembled a corpse more than a living creature.

Magglio and Oliver came up abruptly, then stopped, a few paces behind Salzman.

Salzman felt something *itch* his mind, as the native came up to ten feet of him. Then, when it stopped, Salzman felt a thought.

"Go away."

"Why?" Salzman asked out loud.

"You are killing our minds. Take anything, but go away."



"We come as friends," Salzman said soothingly. "We mean no harm, we did not mean to break any of your taboos. If you are sick, we have medicine on our ship—we can cure—"

The native slumped to his knees. "You are making our minds crazy."

"Good Lord!" Oliver gasped. "Could we have brought some disease?"

"No," the native thought at them. "It is your thoughts. They are powerful, evil thoughts—too horrible to stand. Your minds have—diseases—which we catch, if we come into contact—"

"Thoughts?" Salzman echoed. He looked back at Oliver and Magglio. Was it possible that one of them had a pathological mind? Could he have it? Quickly he discounted the possibility. They had been screened too carefully for sanity and stability before leaving Earth. Nothing like that could have slipped by.

The native was losing strength, but he caught the thought.

"No," he said. "All your thoughts. Behind. Thoughts behind."

Behind. Now what could that mean, Salzman wondered, staring at the panting native on the ground.

"You are monsters," the native's weakening thought said. "You have hideous things in your minds. Things which eat eyeballs—horrible terrors—and other things."

"Space legends!" Oliver gasped. "You've got us all wrong, friend. Those are only—"

"No!" the native thought angrily. "Not those. The things behind! The horrors in the night. The secret things that you do not yourselves think about, for they would drive you insane too, and kill you. The blood-red forest—"

Salzman had guessed it a few seconds back, but he didn't want to believe it. Now he had no choice. "He means our subconscious minds," he said heavily.

"Yes," the native said. "That is the right thought. The things you cannot let yourselves think about, for they would make you sick. But we—we must think them, when you are near."

He tried to tell them something else, but his weakening control snapped. For a moment there was nothing—and then a babbling lunacy of thoughts, driving the Earthmen back by their sheer intensity. There were all Magglio's monsters, screaming and gibbering, coming out of that mad mind. The Ufanges were there, orange and black and scaly, and Oliver's hordes of invaders swept on, hacking their way through the bleeding forest that Salzman had dreamed of, led by a faceless thing that screamed its hate for all living creatures. And behind them, from deeper

in the Earthmen's minds, were tremendous, slimy creatures compounded of all the insecurities and fears that infect young boys growing up in Earth's superstition-infested dark-nesses. The things that crawl out of the black mouths of alleys were there, and the horrors that grin from open closet doors at night, when the family is asleep. And behind that, from the deep in babies' memories, leering blindly—

The Earthmen ran, sobbing and tripping blindly, and madness pursued them all the way to the scouter. Magglio shoved the little ship viciously into the air, with Oliver still climbing through the doorway. Salzman managed to drag him the rest of the way in, as they roared up into the clean air.

FOR A WHILE it didn't seem as though Oliver was going to come around. He wouldn't talk or move, but just stared blankly into space. Lacking knowledge of psychiatry, Salzman tried a home remedy. He

threw a pan of water in the engineer's face, then knocked him flat on his back. It was crude shock-therapy, but it worked.

"You O.K.?" Salzman asked.

"They couldn't let us get near them," Oliver said dully, "they couldn't stand our monstrous, horrible thoughts—the ones we don't dare think out loud." He pulled himself to his feet, holding Salzman's arm for support. "Even the animals couldn't stand it."

"Forget it," Salzman said steadily. "It isn't our fault."

"Just think," Oliver went on in the same dull voice. "The glimpse we got of our subconscious was enough to jar our sanity, they got it full force."

"Forget it."

"I feel so dirty!"

"Shut up!" Magglio screamed.

The engineer looked blank for a moment, then tried to smile. Magglio whistled tunelessly as they prepared for takeoff. "Shall we try another G-type sun, chief? Another planet?"

"I wonder if we should," Salzman said.

DOOMSDAY'S COLOR-PRESS

(Continued From Page 30)

been that way. This was quick and merciful; it, too, had been deliberate, he was sure. She had suspected ambush, or blocks, and had gone ahead to flush them out. If they hadn't turned up, she would have smashed the car some other way when she had seen him safely through.

He slowed his plunging flight as he came out onto the highway and saw no pursuit behind him. The traffic here was light, for the news of Westport's insanity had spread.

The wash of breakers against the sea wall made a welcome friendly roar through the open window of the car. He felt for the briefcase on the seat beside him.

He didn't know what the verdict would be. If Lollar found Myrna was right, history would have to pass

judgment on her. For himself, he wouldn't try. As she had said, maybe there was some other way. Neither she nor Kiersten had found it, and San knew he could not say for himself that there should have been.

If the world were better for her gamble in coming years, it would have been worth it; if not, the magnitude of her failure was no greater than that of other attempts by man to find peace on Earth.

And whatever the judgment of history, San knew that Old Bob would have been proud. She had tried to make the world better for having been in it—and for Old Bob, no newspaperman could do any more.

LEGION OF THE LOST

By Alfred Coppel

Until some completely satisfactory solution is found for strange disappearances we know have occurred, this one is as good as any, for fictional purposes!

IT IS NOVEMBER 20th, 1809. Mr. Benjamin Bathurst, British ambassador to the Austrian court alights from his coach at an inn in Perleburg. It is warm for November, and the innyard is crowded and very dusty. Ostlers are bringing a change of horses for Mr. Bathurst's coach. There is some slight confusion behind the coach and Mr. Bathurst's attention is caught. There is a radiance in the air; the British envoy walks around the horses—

He is never seen again.

It is December 19th, 1944. Major Kevin Randick lies in the muddy snow of the Ardennes fifteen kilometers east of Malmedy. A patrol of the German Fifth Panzer Army, heavily supported by armor, has overrun his command post. A shell exploding



He was drifting through a portal...

nearby stuns him, and he has been left for dead in the snow. The tide of battle sweeps by; fog closes in, blotting out the circle of light that moves questingly through the scraggy pines. The Portal finds him; it descends over him, muffling the far-off sounds of gunfire.

Presently, the Portal retreats into the forest and fades. Kevin Randick is gone; where he lay there is only a pocket of half-melted snow.

It is November 25th, 1872. The sea between the Azores and Lisbon is calm, almost glassy. An American brigantine moves slowly through the unseasonal haze. The lookout aloft calls to helmsman. There is a scurrying on the decks; out of the haze a shimmering circle of radiance has formed. It descends on the slowly moving vessel, blotting out the cries of those aboard her. After a time, the Portal lifts, retreats into the haze and is gone.

The brigantine plies her lonely course. There is no longer a lookout aloft; her wheel swings untended. The ship is a derelict, deserted, fading into the mists. There is a name arched across her stern—

It is *Mary Celeste*.

From the Journal of Extraterrestrial Archeology, February, 1980.

Specialists are currently being besieged with questions concerning the collection of documents known as the Neonyor Archive. This remarkable cache of records, found in the ruins of Neonyor by the first Holcom Foundation Martian expedition, has been examined minutely by martiologists and certified by some as the work of the vanished Canalbuilders.

However, in the interests of objectivity, it must be said that paradoxes abound in the chronicles. How is it, for example, that documents purported to antedate the beginning of the Christian Era on Earth by some 6,000 years are written in a language so tantalizingly similar to modern English?

The more facetious among the scientific brotherhood are suggesting that the Archive is the work of a Martian Nostradamus or Cagliostro...

FROM THE Neonyor Archive, Imperial Recordat.

"To the Grand Master of the Guild of Scientists: The caliber of personnel being recruited for the Legions through the Portals is abominable. They are confused, surly and intractible. I can only conclude that they reflect the attitudes of the Portal Men, in whose hands I have left their indoctrination. Let me warn you that this will not be allowed to continue. Do not imagine that because the wars have taken so many lives that I am forced to rely on the Portals for recruits, that I am entirely dependent on the Guild. You may find to your cost that this is not the case. I warn you. Give me more men, and take care that they are properly oriented; a rebellion in the Legions will be fatal—to you."

Given this day of 21.44.336 at the northern capital of Nyor under my hand and seal,

Gilmore, Imperator.

"To his excellency, the Imperator: Sire, I beg of you to remember I warned you that recruiting men for the Legions through the Portals would be dangerous. The primary purpose of the Portals is research and the seeking of lost knowledge—not the building up of the armies' manpower."

Thavus, Grand Master of the Guild.

"To his excellency, the Imperator: It is with the most profound regrets that I must inform you, Sire, that the remnants of the mutinous XIII Legion have escaped the trap set for them at Shago. Their panzers have scattered in the wild country of the western lands, where I have no doubt that their leader, Randick, will reassemble them and attempt to lead

THE WINNING OF WOCHA



Things seemed familiar on Valeria — astonishingly so. And Phil Jerome was so carried away by the resemblances that he forgot to look for differences!

by R. R. Winterbotham



OOHA had three scrolls filled with mathematical equations, chemical analyses and biological graphs—which should have solved her mating problem; but she could not make up her mind. Could she be

approaching zero? The term, of course, was Valerian—meaning that she might be losing her grip.

But there might be something wrong with the figures. She checked them again: her chromosomes, her blood type, her pedigree, her weight of 110 pounds, and her curly white hair. Even her olive skin-pigmentation was exactly recorded.

The same answer worked out each time. She was equally suitable for each of the two men who stood there waiting for her minus or plus answer. Love on Valeria was a problem of two factors, but Wooha had three—two suitors and herself. It should have been one plus one and instead it was one plus one plus one; in a problem of this kind something had to be subtracted.

"One plus one?" asked Zileto, stockily-built fisherman from the Quadratic Sea.

"One plus one?" pleaded Yabor, the bow-legged miner from the Pentagonal Deep of the South Plane.

"Answer indeterminate," replied Wooha. There was no emotion in her voice, simply perplexity. Mating was not a problem of emotion on Valeria, where everything was worked out on purely scientific lines.

Zileto, strong, weather-beaten and faded by the chlorine waters of the Quadratic Sea, bowed at a 90-degree angle, indicating that he would abide by her choice, whatever it might be. Yabor, on the other hand, gave only a 45-degree bow, indicating that he would prefer that she select someone else. He had been a bachelor for 57 revolutions of the planet about the sun, and he preferred the state. However, there was law on Valeria; when the law said to mate, one mated.

Wooha had a desirable strain in her vermilion eyes. And these eyes were the same shade, to the last angstrom, as those of Zileto and Yabor. In other respects, too, these two men were the only males on the planet that promised evolutionary progress.

"Science is deliberate," spoke Wooha; "one does not reach a conclusion based upon error. And there must be an error somewhere; no two men should have the same equation."

"We will return after you have checked your figures," said Zileto.

"Yes," said Yabor. "But might I suggest that the square root of minus

one be interpolated in each of our equations?"

Wooha drew herself up proudly; she turned her back on her suitors and left them.

"I am afraid that will be a black mark against you, Yabor," said Zileto. "The square root of minus one is an imaginary number—it hints of primitive emotion."

"I am not afraid of black marks," said Yabor; "in fact, I would rather be single. Somehow, I can't believe that mating and emotions are things to be separated."

"Wooha has no emotions," spoke Zileto.

"One equals one," said Yabor, which was the Valerian way of saying that's what he meant.

Wooha combed out her silvery hair and checked her figures after her suitors were gone. At first, her mating had seemed simple; the preliminary survey had limited her suitors to two, and it had seemed unlikely that a choice would be difficult. But the more Wooha studied them, the more she found them equally suited. True, they did not match in all respects. The bronzed seaman Zileto was younger, 38 Valerian years compared with Yabor's 57; but Yabor had two-thirds greater wealth, which exactly balanced the difference in ages. Zileto was fourteen Rogwyns stronger than Yabor; but Yabor had fourteen ambots greater wisdom, so they balanced there. Whatever one man lacked, he had an equal advantage in something else. Never did a woman of Valeria have a more difficult problem.

WOOHA heaved a great sigh of perplexity. Perhaps an answer would come to her where the air was more clear. Here by the sea, there was high humidity; the blood was not

so sharp. She tossed her head, tied her white hair with a purple ribbon and put on her tin-plated sandals. A moment later, she had emerged from her house onto the roof and was climbing into her gyroscope car. She started the motor and rose gracefully over the housetops; then she adjusted the axis of the machine toward the mountain embankment in the west.

As she flew, she thought; but no answer came. So deeply did Wooha think that she mistook the strange sound that came to her ears for thunder. It rumbled some instants and she realized that it was not an ordinary atmospheric sound. It came louder, like the beating of drums. It screamed in her ears and then, flashing like lightning, a flaming object shot past the front of her car.

Wooha thought she knew the phenomena; although it was unexpected, she showed not the faintest trace of surprise or fright. It was, she told herself, simply a meteor, flashing from the space beyond the cloud laden atmosphere of her planet. Quite often, meteorites had been found on Valeria, and sometimes scientists observed their fall. They had been studied; scientists had learned much from them that could not be observed in the heavens, because of the clouds. On stratospheric trips in specially equipped gyro-cars, Valerians had learned that there were other worlds than their own circling the sun. Meteors might be fragments of these worlds.

The scientific value of watching a meteor alight on Valeria, caused Wooha to set her controls so that it followed the path of the flaming object. But it was going faster than her gyro-car and by the time she caught up with it, the object had settled down on the flat surface—known as the Plane—beyond the mountain range. It had already cooled.

Wooha brought her car down beside it and stepped out onto the soil. The meteorite was strangely cool,

for she realized that descent through the atmosphere should have made it white with heat. Perhaps something had slowed it down; unfortunately she had not thought to check its speed. It was not rough, like most of the meteorites she had seen. It was, instead, long and conical at the nose. Its cylindrical bulk was truncated at the back and there were numerous openings, nozzle-like, something like the jets of the old-fashioned Valerian semi-rockets. The thought struck Wooha at once that this was man-made, perhaps from some outlandish hinterland, near the Valerian equator, where the hairy Pithecanthropus dwelt.

She approached the meteorite and her suspicions were confirmed. A door opened in the side and from the interior stepped a man wearing a globe-like helmet over his head. He stood outside the door a moment, looking in the opposite direction from Wooha. He held instruments aloft, worked with them a few seconds, then removed the helmet from his head. He turned, and she saw him the same instant he saw her.

His face was hairy, but he was somewhat more advanced than the sub-men of the Equator. His skin was lighter than hers, and his hair black; but his eyes were strangest of all. They were as blue as the Quadratic Sea.

His hand moved quickly to a triangular case at his side. From it he removed an object, roughly right-angled in shape and tubular in structure. He pointed the tube at Wooha and she drew back; she knew at once it was a weapon, not very different from the needle-guns carried by the mining men, such as Yabor, who often had to kill wave-snakes in the underground caverns of Valeria.

WOoha was not afraid, for a Valerian scientist never lets emotion get the upper hand. She faced the creature calmly and recited an equation which should appeal to his

intelligence: "One minus one equals zero!"

Even a pygmy minded proto-gorilla would realize that by removing her, nothing of value to himself could be gained.

The man-creature regarded her with his gray-blue eyes. He did not seem to understand at first, then finally he seemed to realize that Wooha was harmless to himself and he replaced the weapon. His lips moved and a vibrant growl, pitched in octave ZH, full-three tones lower than the thundering voice of Yabor, burst forth.

"By the great horned moon, it's a woman—or at least it's shaped like one!"

The words meant nothing to Wooha, but she memorized them—along with the tonal inflections. Later she would put them through a translator and find out what they meant. That is, if they meant anything, which she doubted. The mathematical cadence was not very intelligent.

He probably was saying that he was hungry. Primitives were always thinking about their stomachs. Well, come to think of it... Wooha quickly switched her thoughts away from this.

She must find out about the man. "Give me your factor, please," she asked. This was a universal expression which even the Venusian monkeys understood.

"Jehoshaphat," spoke the primitive. "even with red eyes, she's more beautiful than a drunken dream."

Again the words escaped Wooha, although she memorized them. Once she had won a minor degree at the Academy by translating the war-call of the Valerian Thudbud, but that animal had a beep-boop arrangement of its syllables that made sense. This creature spoke only in vowels and consonants.

"No denominator," she decided, using the academy expression for something that defied orderly classification.

"A strange name," said the stranger, "but I wouldn't try to pronounce

it. I'll just call you Beautiful." He smiled and Wooha grew nauseated at the display of emotion; surely this was the most primitive thing on Valeria—and it looked so much like a man.

"I'm Colonel Phil Jerome, pilot, navigator and crew of the first flight from Earth to Valeria." He bowed. Wooha noted that it was a 45-degree bow and this was the first thing the man had done that she understood. He was indicating that he didn't care whether she wanted to marry him or not. Had Wooha been capable of emotion she would have been angry; she hadn't considered him as a mate.

"Your syllables are impossible fractions," she said, choosing to ignore the proposal of marriage.

The creature was tame; she could be thankful for that. Now he pointed his big gloved hand at his chest and spoke again: "Me Phil Jerome. Allee samee fly-um hotcha big smoke-buggy from green star up there—" he pointed heavenward.

Suddenly Wooha understood. He was telling his primitive name and indicating that he had come from the heavens. Of course! The other worlds *were* inhabited after all; Valerian speculation had been proved accurate again. Now she understood why the man was primitive; he hadn't had the right environment. Valeria, of course, was the best of all possible worlds, to use the words of the great philosopher Wooleterre; naturally, nothing great could come from anything less.

HE REPEATED the words slowly: "Me Phil Jerome—"

The sub-human held up his hand and stopped her. He pointed to his chest again: "Phil."

"Phil." Wooha managed to ape the pronunciation perfectly. Then she pointed her slender finger at herself and said: "Wooha." The Phil wagged his head. Possible this meant negative. "Beautiful."

"Minus Beautiful, plus Wooha," she corrected. "Equals Wooha."

"Beautiful," said the Phil. He laughed, out loud this time, apparently without shame. Wooha wished he'd stop this vulgar display of emotion.

"Well, I didn't expect you to speak my language," he said, "but I'm surprised that you're intelligent. We thought Valeria might be in the age of reptiles; in some ways, you're almost as highly developed as human beings."

He probably was barking at the cloud glint from the Quadratic sea on the horizon, Wooha thought; primitive apes often did that.

"In fact, you are a human being. Sort of an albino, although your skin is dark. Nice contrast. And those pink eyes do something to me, Beautiful."

"Impossible equation," Wooha said.

"That must mean 'yes,'" said the Phil. "Don't say 'no' for awhile—let's just work on one word at a time."

He took a step toward her.

"I'm going to take you to the Academy so our scientists can examine you," said Wooha.

"That's great," said Phil, "but all those purrs and snorts don't mean a thing to me; supposing I teach you my language."

"Impossible equation," said Wooha again.

"Ah! The lady says 'Yes.' Well, how do you teach a language. Lessee. When I learned Latin in school, we took up the verbs first, because they were hardest. It was *amo, amare, amatus*, meaning 'love.' The Phil grinned. "Okay, Beautiful. 'Love.'"

The last word had a funny sound and Wooha repeated it: "Love."

"Fine. Know what it means? Like this—"

He took another step, and Wooha held her ground, even in the presence of primitive beasts true Valerian high-type human shows no emotion.

The Phil seized her in his arms, drew her close to him and placed his lips on hers. He released her. She stood still and calm.

"Get her!" The Phil was flushed, his eyes were disgustingly bright. "No," he said, "I guess you don't; I should have snaved."

"Love," said Wooha. She understood, it was a name for nothing.

"You got it!" Phil exclaimed. "Tell me, Beautiful, are you always like an iceberg?"

"Zero," said Wooha, giving him the Valerian translation for love; to Phil's ears, it came as a whistle.

"I guess it doesn't show on the surface, but it's there. That's a wolf-whistle if I ever heard one."

"Zero plus one," came a voice behind Wooha.

Phil HEARD the whistle followed by syllables and as Wooha turned, he saw a Valerian male behind her. The figure was Yabor, the miner. In his hand he held a needle gun.

"Is this ape tame?" Yabor asked. "or shall I blast him?"

"Put the gun away, Yabor," said Wooha. "He is zero."

Phil heard the whistle and grinned. "I guess I'm the hot stuff on Valeria. Everybody's talking about me—or rather whistling."

Yabor pointed to his gyro-car parked beside Wooha. "I was going back to the mines," he explained. "and I saw you here. I was not sure that the creature was tame. Funny species." He looked closely at Phil. "Never saw one with blue eyes before."

"He is from outer space," Wooha explained. "Very low mentality—a parabola without a focus."

"I think I'd better look him over. He touched you, and he might be poisonous."

Yabor adjusted his needle gun to a weak power and pressed the trigger. The Phil grew rigid and toppled to the ground.

"That'll hold him for one span of daylight," said Yabor. "It won't take that long to get his complete equation."

GIULLE, record-maker of Valeria, was summoned to the Academy late the next afternoon to examine a new species of sub-human brought to the laboratory by Yabor, the miner, and Wooha, the scientist. Yabor had drawn off samples of the creature's blood and had made measurements, as well as various other examinations.

The complete data was assembled, translated into figures and fed by tape into the electronic equation maker. Within the space of a few minutes the result was brought forth on a scroll. It was a complex four-dimensional rhombus, latitudinally dilex and transversally octoprismatic with triangular oscillatory gymphs.

Giulle examined the graph carefully, then he said: "His equations, Wooha, show that he would make an ideal mate for you; this makes three candidates. Under the law you must make a choice."

"How can this sub-human creature be my mate? His language has no mathematical cadence. It is easy to see that he does not express himself in terms that are scientific. We of the higher race quite often use equations to say what we wish to say."

"Not always," said Yabor.

"No; we have other terms," said Wooha. She squealed this thought. "Sometimes we even use signs. When we speak of invertebrates, we place our hands over our heart—" Wooha made the conventional sign. "But his knowledge of vocalnumerics is zero." She whistled.

"Ah! Talking about me, I see," said Phil. He had been lying on a basalt table beneath the X-ray machine. Now he rose.

Wooha continued, paying no attention to Phil. "I have only learned two words of his language, 'Phil', ap-

parently what he calls himself, and 'Love',—which is some kind of a gesture, I suppose. I couldn't quite understand the word."

"Now you're talking my language, Beautiful," said Phil. He took a step and seized Wooha in his arms. "Love is wonderful," he said, kissing her.

Wooha managed to free herself, although Phil clung to her hand, evidencing insecurity. "His mentality is zero," said Wooha, whistling.

Phil nodded, "I don't understand your language, but I know what you're thinking, kid."

"The law," reminded Giulle, "says you must choose a mate." He looked at Phil. "He is human enough to come under the law."

WOOHA'S preeminence as the foremost woman-scientist of her world made her selection of a mate an important event. The fact that three men—one of them showing sub-human characteristics—could qualify, was not beyond mathematical probability, considering that Valeria was densely populated in spots.

Accordingly, on the gypsum steps of the Matrimonial Building, throngs of women congregated on the following day. There were only a few men, all present in an official capacity; men were not interested in marriage.

The three candidates, Zileto, Yabor and the Phil were standing on a raised dias at the foot of the steps. Wooha, dressed in a white Ghunskin gown and carrying a bouquet of chartreuse cranzies, appeared in a litter borne by six Equatorial proto-gorillas.

Phil was a little dazed by the proceedings; he had assumed that this was some sort of a ceremony welcoming him to Valeria. However, he didn't quite understand Zileto's presence—unless he was the mayor or something. As Wooha appeared, he smiled and bowed; the women who had assembled clapped their hands—which was the Valerian method of wishing a successful union.

Phil turned to the women, clasped both hands above his head and shook them in a sweeping arc.

Giulle spoke to Wooha. "I'm not certain that the Phil understands the solemnity of the occasion," he said. "I've made a study of emotion in the lower orders of man, and I would say off hand that his is not the attitude of a mating male."

"What is the correct attitude?"

"He should be badly frightened and try to escape," Giulle replied.

Wooha glanced at Zileto and Yabor. True to their breeding as higher-type human beings, they displayed not the slightest emotion of any sort.

"Let me try to explain it to him," she said. "We know that he understands mathematics and he should understand a simple equation."

Wooha came close to Phil. He smiled at her vulgarly she thought. She pointed first to Phil, then herself, giving the equation, "One plus one," the age-old Valerian idiom for mating.

Then she turned to Yabor and repeated the equation. Then she pointed to Zileto and herself. "One, plus one, plus one, plus," she said, pointing to herself first and then to each man with her right hand, and at the same time raising one finger on her left hand until she held four fingers before his eyes. "Minus two." She doubled two of her four fingers. "Equals one plus one." She pointed to Phil, then herself.

For an instant Phil's brow wrinkled. Then suddenly dawn broke. "I get it. These Joes are your boyfriends!" Phil pointed to Yabor and Zileto.

"Boyfriends," said Wooha. She held up four fingers. She doubled two, then straightened them, she doubled two more, then straightened them. "Minus two."

"I get it," said Phil grimly. He turned suddenly on Zileto and Yabor. For the first time, he seemed to no-

[Turn To Page 85]

"We're being conquered by a race of creatures we've dismissed as completely harmless!"

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The water
was rising
as Teraf
clung . . .

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The long-dreaded day arrived
when the "gods" were weighed
in the balance, and a world
died by its own hand.

*And the woman said, The serpent
beguiled me.*

Genesis. 3:13



THE LEADER of a successful forlorn hope expedition should be the proudest man in the world. He has surmounted obstacles others thought unsurmountable; he has, in effect, returned from the dead. What could be sweeter...more ego-fertilizing?

Yet, as Teraf, newly-crowned King of Hellas, stood before the golden throne of Zeus, Pitar of ten terrestrial kingdoms and viceroy of the Martian Anarchiate, and reported on his expedition to barbarous Egypt, his heart was ashes in his breast.

Grimly, Teraf told the assembled

Council how he and other crew members of the *Argo* had returned the Princess Pan Doh Ra to her imperious father in Sais, that ponderous city of stone spinxes and sacred cats. He described their narrow escape from the clashing towers which guard the harbor of Sais; their meeting with Medea, the sorceress and sister of Pharaoh Plu Toh Ra; their confinement near the den containing Egypt's secret weapon, a herd of man-carrying—and man-eating—pterodactyls; their final, almost miraculous, escape after destroying the herd but without gaining possession of the radioactive orichalcum whose theft from Atlan had crippled Mars' first experiment in interplanetary imperialism.

"Splendid, my boy!" Forgetting his gouty foot, the Pitar sprang from his seat and placed his hands tenderly on the young Hellene's broad shoulders. "Forget the orichalcum; you achieved your minimum objective—to obtain information and cripple the Egyptian offensive power. I will rec-

commend you for the highest honor the Martian Anarchiate has to offer... the Diamond Cross of Danae."

"We will be able to obtain pitchblende ore from western Africa for the manufacture of orichalcum soon," twittered Vulcan, guiding spirit of the Bab El power station. "Now that the threat of aerial attack from Sais has been lifted, we can carry on until communication with the home planet is restored."

"But what of Pan Doh Ra?" Teraf gulped miserably. "If she is really loyal to Atlan, her fate will be terrible. I wouldn't put it beyond her father to offer her as a sacrifice to his dark gods. If she is a traitor to us, as all the evidence seems to indicate, she undoubtedly will betray our plans in exchange for marriage with my renegade brother, Refo. He is enroute to Sais now."

"I'm sorry, Teraf," the old man sighed. "But love must always bow to pressing affairs of state. I can do nothing to aid your princess now. Later, perhaps, there may be..."

A panting messenger burst into the chamber and prostrated himself at the feet of Vulcan. He wore the harness of a minor engineer. "Sir," he gabbled. "Marco has fled the tower.... And five more ounces of orichalcum are missing from the Bab El vaults."

"Impossible!" The hunchbacked engineer was hobbling toward the door even as he spoke. "Marco is a good boy; I trained him myself.... And even if he turned traitor, a cat couldn't get through our lines—let alone a man carrying a lead container weighing more than a hundred pounds."

"But what," interposed Hermes, "if Marco has gone mad? He could have carried the stuff in his mouth in a very thin container, couldn't he?"

"Yes, of course." Vulcan hesitated at the door. "But the radiation would kill him in a matter of hours...practically burn his head off."

"General Ares and Hermes will co-

operate in a search for the missing engineer, dead or alive," Zeus ordered. Then: "Have either of you any ideas as to where he might have fled before he collapsed?"

The warlord shook his head gloomily.

Hermes said: "I think I can at least produce what's left of Marco."

As Teraf left the chamber the chronicler dropped in beside him and slipped an arm through his. "Say, King," he grinned. "May I have an audience?"

THEY TRAVERSED the long corridor, entered Teraf's suite, where the chronicler poured himself a stiff drink and collapsed into his customary contortion on the most comfortable chair.

"I need your help in trailing Aphrodite," he began; "I have a hunch she had a hand in those thefts. I haven't got anything on her yet, but right now is the first time she's been out of my sight this week."

"That's a pretty serious charge against poor old Zeus' pet daughter."

"Well, look at it this way: she disappeared after the first batch of orichalcum vanished. Then, I've learned that she has been making sheep's-eyes at Marco."

"But what on earth could be her motive?"

"Here's the story. I picked it up from all sorts of places. The morgue at the Planet...newspaper gossip... You know..."

"Two years ago Aphrodite paid a visit to Sais...stayed there several months. At the time, it was rumored that Piu Toh Ra might take her as his queen; nothing came of it, so far as anybody knew. But she returned to Atlan with the idea that Martians were too wrapped up in business and colonization to pay any attention to the more esthetic things in life.

"Later she decided she wanted to be a 'business woman', too...wanted to amount to something like Athena. A complete change of heart, you see. She

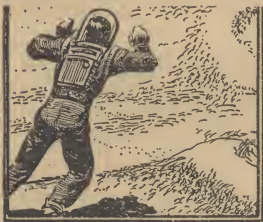
went up to Bab El and studied for a time under Vulcan, who adores her—the sentimental old fool. Flubbed her electronics in grand style, of course, and wound up by having violent flirtations with members of the staff...”

Automatically Hermes' hand went out, only to discover that the decanter was empty.

"I'll ring for another," said his host.

"Never mind. Heracles was telling me there's a bottle or two of Iberian nectar in the cellars that have been gathering cobwebs since Poseidon's time. What say we broach them?"

A gnome-like cellar-man let them pass into the wine-vaults without question, then trailed after them like a misshapen ghost.



"Why don't you ask him where it is?" queried Teraf, staring helplessly at the array of bottles, barrels and kegs which surrounded them.

"Nuh uh! More fun to look!"

As they turned into an ill-lighted, cobwebby corridor the gnome skipped into the lead and blocked their way with long, outstretched arms.

"Can't go there, my masters," he bawled.

"And why not, you long-eared bat?"

"Orders from the Pitar, masters; I have them here." He thrust a hand under his leather jerkin. It came forth holding a curved blade with which he slashed the reporter.

Hermes slumped to the floor. Before there was time for the blow to be repeated, Teraf brought a bottle down

on the cellar-man's head. The gnome collapsed across the body of his victim.

"Don't wait," gapsed the chronicler, as Teraf bent over him. "You'll find Aphrodite down that corridor, I think; she wasn't at the council meeting, remember... Great Land of Nod, king, stop pawing me! The future of Atlan may depend..." He fainted.

SNATCHING the cellar-man's lantern, Teraf raced down the narrow passageway. Far in front he thought he caught a flash of white. He redoubled his pace.

The white patch doubled a corner. He skidded after it.

"Don't come a step nearer," panted a frightened voice. "I...I have you covered."

Teraf hurled himself headfirst at the shadowy figure ahead. They went down in a tangle, the gun sparkling harmlessly; the woman he had pinioned twisted and bit like a panther.

Seizing both her wrists with one hand, Teraf at last retrieved the lantern with the other and flashed its light on her face.

It was Aphrodite, of course, but a changed Aphrodite. Her face was almost as white as his own, now; her mouth was drawn into a square through which teeth gleamed. Her eyes showed mere greenish slits.

"Zeus shall hear of this!"

"So he shall." Teraf released her and picked up the gun. "Now march in front of me quietly, or you will return to the sea-foam from which the silly poets say you came."

Her mood changed. Bowing her head she begged and pleaded as she stumbled along before him.

"Got her?" queried a weak voice as they approached the end of the corridor.

"You bet." Teraf breathed a sigh of relief to find the reporter conscious again. "Can you hold out till I come back?"

"Sure. I'm bleeding a bit, but I'm hard to kill. Take her to Zeus your-

self; she'll bribe or seduce the guards. Hurry...back."

The Hellenes dashed for the cellar entrance, now dragging his sobbing captive behind him. Up the stairs he stumbled and burst into the audience-chamber to find the Pitar surrounded by a sea of war-maps. Despite Aphrodite's screams, he blurted out his story.

ZEU'S FACE mottled with fury. He rang for the guard, then caught his daughter in his arms as she fainted gracefully. "Get Hermes to a doctor," he snapped. "If the cellar-man is alive, lock him up. Then take a squad and search that corridor; I'll take care of this."

Collecting men-at-arms as he ran, Teraf rushed back into the cellar. The gnome still lay across the body of the chronicler; he was dead. Hermes was unconscious again but his wound though deep, had not penetrated a vital organ. Teraf had him carried above post-haste.

With five men at his back, the Helene then went down the fatal corridor until he reached a dead end. There the lanterns revealed that the flooring had been torn up and clumsily replaced; under the dirt was Marco, and another.

And back behind a row of tall bottles they discovered a heavy leather container in which the missing orichalcum was now enclosed.

Dispatching this to the Pitar, Teraf hurried to the palace hospital. Hermes welcomed him with his usual quizzical grin. "I'm still in one piece, king," he whispered. "Vanya will have me up in about a week or I'll skin him. Check up and see if the cellar-man wasn't a relative of Marco's. Seems to me I remember something about a deformed brother... That's why we went down there in such a hurry. I got to figuring that Aphrodite would make a break for the cellar as soon as she thought I wasn't shadowing her." He yawned and went to sleep forth with.

In the audience-chamber, the council had been reassembled, hurriedly. Vulcan, his wrinkled face twisted by grief and disbelief, sat on the edge of a chair, staring alternately at his gnarled, scarred hands and at his former protegee; Heracles lounged uncomfortably in his corner; Athena was helping a nurse to restore consciousness to the captive.

As Teraf entered, Aphrodite opened her eyes. "I didn't do it, father," she wailed like a little girl. "I was just looking for a bottle of wine. Teraf frightened me." She beat her round breasts with clenched fists.

"Let me see those hands," commanded the Pitar.

"I...I burned them... Scalded them while washing my hair; they're not pretty." She hid them behind her back.

"You never washed your own hair in your life." Zeus jerked the offending hands into the light; the palms were blistered and seared.

"Typical orichalcum burn," Vulcan gulped; "she probably got it putting the material in the big container."

"Aphrodite, look at me!" The Pitar took the broken woman by the shoulders. "Enough of your lies. I know there is one thing that you fear above all others; that is death! Now tell us why you did this foul thing."

The once-proud darling of the court whimpered and prepared to faint again. Her father shook her roughly. At this she recovered herself; her eyes became stony, her mouth tense. "Will I be pardoned if I tell everything?"

"You'll not die."

For a long moment she stared down at her ruby-studded sandals, then threw back her head defiantly. "Yes, I had Ander and Marco steal orichalcum for me! They loved me. They hid it in their mouths; they died for me. They were men, not machines."

"They are neither now," breathed

Zeus. "Proceed. Why did Plu Toh Ra want the stuff?"

"Plu Toh Ra?" Her glance wavered. "To blow up Atlan," she replied at last.

"Heracles," snapped the Pitar, "wring my daughter's pretty neck for me."

THE GIANT lounged forward, his hairy hands extended like hamis. Aphrodite screamed, and her eyes started from her head.

"I'll tell everything," she gabbled. "Plu Toh Ra plans to capture the dam at the Pillars of Heracles and blow it up if you refuse to surrender. The orichalcum, except the little used to bomb Atlan, has been made into a bomb which will be held as a sword over you."

"And you connived in this?"

"Yes. Plu Toh Ra loves me as I always wanted to be loved; he, too, is a man. You others are mere slaves and drudges. He will marry me... make me his queen... have me worshipped as a goddess in Sais. He..."

"Shut up, strumpet!" Zeus whirled on the council. "There's not a moment to lose," he thundered. "Even now, the Pharaoh may be on his way; that visit from Refo, which Teraf has told us of, is probably the prelude to an attack. If the dam is taken we're helpless; if it is broken the waters of the Atlantic will sweep over all of Atlan, drowning it hundreds of feet deep. None will escape."

There was a bull-roar of fury from the corner into which Heracles had withdrawn. "It's my dam." The giant's eyes were wild. "I built it. And, by the fifteen little demons, I'll save it."

Zeus shook his head. "Iberia is almost a wilderness," he said soothingly; "those who go, will have to travel much of the way on horseback. Your weight would kill any horse in half a day's ride. And then, I'd rather keep you here; it's war to the death now, and I'll need every engineer in Atlan."

"Teraf, you've had experience traveling through rough country; start at once. A regiment of cavalry will follow, but you must get to the dam first and warn the guard. Plu Toh Ra is jamming our radio station with his own at Sais, so we can't get through that way."

"Take the fastest motor car at the palace. Quite a number of the internal-combustion kind have been taken out of museums and reconditioned. No airplanes have been made ready for service yet or we wouldn't be in this mess."

"The roads are good about half the way from here to the dam. After that you'll have to trust to luck and ingenuity. Apollo, give him gold for the purchase of horses."

"Probably the Egyptians have one or two days' start, but they have farther to go and must take a round-about course. They may have a few internal-combustion cars. Their pterodactyls are dead, or escaped you say, and their planes can't operate without power from Bab El."

"Now go, with our blessing; there'll be others following you, so don't hesitate to take chances. Don't think of your own life; think of Atlan. Let us hope this is not farewell."



In Egypt we have the oldest of the Old World children of Atlantis; in her magnificence we have a testimony to the development attained by the parent country; by that country whose kings were the gods of succeeding nations, and whose kingdom extended to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Ignatius Donnelly's "Atlantis."

IN SAIS, the arrival of Refo brought on a climax, the day before Aphrodite's treason had been revealed in Atlan.

Dusty and tired, the King of Hellas strode into the Pharaoh's presence unannounced; he found the Egyptian lecturing his daughter on her unseemly conduct. (The visit of the princess Medea to Teraf in the dungeons had been hushed up by the simple method of poisoning all the soldiers and priests who had been witness to it.)

Declaring that he would give her one more chance to act as a member of the royal household should, Plu Toh Ra had by this time placed his daughter on probation—that is, had given her the freedom of the palace.

When the black-haired northerner burst into the shadowed throne room, Pan Doh Ra rose. Without a glance or word she marched into her apartment and slammed the door.

"Pardon our daughter," said the ruler with a thin smile. "Her manners, and those of other members of our house, are not of the best... a fault which we shall now remedy." He rose to follow the girl.

"Stop," barked Refo; "this is no time to discipline wayward daughters. Is the bomb finished?"

His deep voice penetrated faintly through the massive door of the princess' quarters. Abandoning her intention to put as much space as possible between herself and her former betrothed, Pan Doh Ra placed one pink ear to the jamb.

"Not so loud," cautioned the Egyptian. "Walls have ears, even in Sais. Ha! A clever phrase!" He glanced about for a scribe; then, since none was present, scratched the deathless words on a piece of papyrus.

"Yes," he said, "the bomb is completed; a Martian engineer we kidnapped was induced to bring his labors to a close yesterday.... He may live for some time, they say... His bomb is a work of art. We used all the orichalcum at hand and will have to depend on that silly fool, Aphrodite, to provide us with more—if more should be needed."

"We must depart at once for the dam, then," Refo interrupted. "My

spies at Atlan say Bab El will be repaired within the fortnight; that will place so much power in Vulcan's hands that our cause will become hopeless.

"If we attempt to reach the dam after the tower is restored, the Pitar will know of it by radio at once, for your jamming will be futile. Unless we go with an army then, we would be arrested in one of the African colonies; if we stride now, we have our only chance at surprise and success."



"Perhaps you have heard"—the Pharaoh was speaking now, "that that renegade brother of yours succeeded in poisoning all of our pterodactyls except one on which he escaped from the dungeons. Our perfidious sister escaped with other Martians and Titans in an airship, which achieved the impossible by reaching Sais. We do not think that ship succeeded in making the return journey to Atlan; search parties are out."

"Medea, too?" Refo muttered.

The Pharaoh chose not to hear that remark. "We'll have to use a motorcar to reach the dam, and depend on horses if it breaks down."

"Teraf told me of his coup when he reached Athens," Refo interrupted with a bitter smile.

"Then he's dead!" The Egyptian pushed his ubiquitous cat aside and leaped to his feet with blazing eyes.

"Dead? Oh, I didn't have him killed, if that's what you mean. I haven't yet descended to fratricide."

"You're a sentimental fool! Well, at least he's safely imprisoned."

"No, I sent him to Atlan after he promised never to lead—an attack on Hellas."

THE PHARAOH'S jaw fell; he collapsed upon his throne. On the other side of the chamber door, Pan Doh Ra felt an icy hand relax its grip on her heart.

"You half-wit," the monarch raged. "You idiot. The Martians should decorate you for that deed!" He stared at his ally through slitted eyes and added: "We wonder if you are not secretly in league with Atlan."

During this harangue the cat had been creeping toward the Hellene on its golden belly; now, fur bristling and tail switching madly, it snarled and spat at Refo with a fury equal to that of its master.

By this time the Egyptian had worked himself into a frenzy. His eyes rolled. A fleck of spittle appeared on his lips. "When an empire is at stake you let sentiment override sense," he screamed. "Coward! Traitor! Sw—"

At the beginning of this tirade, Refo had stood as one turned to marble; as it proceeded the blood drained from his face. Now, as the Pharaoh's lips opened to utter the final insult, he leaped forward, kicked the clawing feline out of his way and gripped his fellow-conspirator by the throat.

"By Gaea and Chronos," he gritted. "Another word and I'll kill you, though I be slashed to mincemeat by your guards afterward."

Fascinated by the drama unfolding in the royal chamber, the princess had opened her door slightly and placed an eye to the crack; as Refo spoke she saw her father's rage drain slowly from him, like wine from a cracked vase. Finally he laughed shakily, though his eyes retained their wild glint. "Forgive us, friend," he muttered; "we are often carried away of late by these fits of passion. It is the strain of waiting. They mean nothing. Forget what we have said. Come." He straightened his great shoulders. "We start for the Pillars of Hercules at once."

As he spoke, his roving eyes lit on the door from behind which his

daughter was peeping. With the spring of a forest animal he gained the portal and threw it open, knocking the girl to the floor.

"Ignoble! Ignoble!" he raged again. "Oh, Isis and Osiris, what have we done that our own daughter should spy on us." He beat the heavy gold collar around his neck with jeweled hands.

"Up, Alhfa brat!" He stirred the cowering girl with the toe of his sandal. "You are no longer our daughter. We have no time to deal with you now, but when we return we shall have the pleasure of cropping those pretty ears. Until then..."

He returned to the throne, picked up the cat, which was still whimpering with terror from Refo's kick, placed it gently on the floor inside his daughter's room, then shut and bolted the door.

"Horus will see that she gets into no more mischief," he grinned wryly.

●

FOR HOURS Pan Doh Ra lay upon a divan to which she had dragged herself after the door was locked, staring dry-eyed out of the barred window. At last she got up and, closely followed by the limping Horus, once more made the dreary round of the apartment that had served as her prison off and on, ever since she had thrown mud at a stately high priest of Osiris—thereby forcing him to spend a ten-day period in purification.

The memory of that incident served to revive her spirits somewhat; even as a child she had hated those shaven-pated men who, by means of their prophecies, influenced her father's every mood and action. As a grubby tomboy of ten, she had been particularly affronted because they trod solemnly about in robes so immaculate that it was considered a defilement if so much as a fly lighted upon them.

Automatically, she tried the bars of various slitted windows. They held fast as she knew they would; so she

resigned herself to another period of semi-starvation—unless her old nurse dared to smuggle her something more substantial than bread and water.

The cat also seemed satisfied with the results of the inspection and retreated purring into a corner. There it sat stiffly erect as though conscious that it was divine, surveying the princess through unwinking green eyes that reminded her of her father.

She had always despised the supercilious creature, but now, under its steady glare she began to experience nervous fear. It seemed to have a sinister intelligence and to be mocking her. The idea came that it might really be supernatural, as the people believed; that it embodied some fiend or perhaps her father's Ka—that twin soul which Egyptians were supposed to possess. But her life on Mars had taught her to laugh at such superstitions; she refused to think further along that line.

In the afternoon she watched while, to a great blare of trumpets, the Pharaoh, Refo, and three adjutants drove out of the palace courtyard. They were preceded, as was the custom, by a pet leopard led by two Nubians. And they were surrounded by the guard of honor which would escort them to the city walls on their 600-league expedition.



Night came, and with it a slave bearing two golden trays. On one reposed a generous slice of raw steak for Horus; on the other was the well-remembered jewelled cup of tepid water and decrepit piece of black bread.

She hurled the trays at the eunuch who brought them, then, as the door slammed on his dripping fat face, wished she hadn't. She thought of purloining the cat's meat from the

floor, but Horus already had wolfed it down, and the bread with it.

Pan Doh Ra spent the night in fitful sleep intermingled with dreams of the horror which would descend upon Atlan if her father succeeded in his purpose. Half-waking, she cursed the Martian strain in her which had prevented her killing the monster; fully awake, she shivered to note that the green eyes of the golden cat still were fixed upon her.

Dawn came and another weary, endless day. The conspirators must be far on their way by now. Computing the mileage as best she could, the princess reasoned that they would reach their destination in a week to ten days.

In a fury she again tugged at the unyielding bars, then vented her impotence by hurling bric-a-brac at the cat which, unaccountably, had changed its attitude and now insisted on fawning about her knees and striving to cover her with caresses. The animal dodged her missiles. After the barrage he retired to his corner, however, and bothered her no more.

IT WAS THE night of the fourth day. Pan Doh Ra could not sleep; for hours she crouched on a window seat, staring downward at the pinheads of light, which set off Sais from the plain, panting in the dead heat which presaged a sandstorm. Suddenly there came a rush of air outside the window. Had the storm broken? She glanced upward, but stars still glittered in the black sky.

Again came the roar of wind, to die away as quickly as it came. But this time a great bulk screened the stars for an instant.

Pan Doh Ra's breath caught in her throat. Was it? Could it be? She pressed her face against the bars. Outside poised a great bat-winged creature which stared at her with beady, brilliant eyes. "Sonny!" the

girl called softly. "Sonny boy! To me!" She started the faint crooning at which she was so adept.

The 'dactyl balanced a moment. Catching her scent and the crooning, it slid suddenly downwind and clutched the bars with its murderous claws. Sobbing with delight that one friend remembered her, Pan Doh Ra stroked the long, ludicrous head and whispered baby-talk into the mousy ears.

Then a thought struck her. "Sonny," she commanded. "Get me out of here. Come on boy; use that long head of yours."

The beast blinked sagely but made no move. Desperately, she began to tug at the bars.

With a guttural cluck of understanding, Sonny hurled himself backward with a roar of wings, still clinging tightly to his perch. Two of the iron bars snapped like dry sticks.

At this the cat, which had been bristling and spitting, screamed and launched itself full at the girl's breast, clawing at her eyes as she threw up frantic hands to protect her throat. The thing must have weighed twenty pounds; its attack forced her back against the broken bars until she was teetering over the void.

A demon seemed to possess Horus; his hind claws were ripping away the front of her gown. The pain became unbearable, and the girl felt herself fainting as she strove vainly to grip the furry throat.

As she swayed through the window a long, snake-like neck shot over her shoulder; jaws clamped upon the back of the cat. Horus was jerked between the bars, shaken like a rat and hurled yowling into the night.

Sobbing with the weakness of reaction, Pan Doh Ra wriggled through the wrecked casement. Somehow she got astride of Sonny's back and, gripping the loose skin between his wings, gave the command to rise.

The tropical moon was casting a mellow glow over the city as they

swept around the palace to the accompaniment of a great shouting. Perhaps it was thought that Teraf had returned; perhaps the guard realized that the royal prisoner was escaping. However it was, there broke forth much snapping of guns and hurling of spears.

"Come on, rascal," shouted Pan Doh Ra as the long wings rose and fell, unharmed by the attack; "we're going to the Pillars of Heracles."



...there occurred violent earthquakes and floods; and in a single day and night of misfortune all your warlike men in a body sank into the earth, and the island of Atlantis in like manner disappeared, and was sunk beneath the sea.

Plato's Timaeus.

SEVEN DAYS out of Atlan, Teraf was encountering delays and heartbreaking difficulties. The roads in this almost unsettled part of the empire were atrocious; fuel was hard to find. Again and again he was forced to bump over long detours, or face the lengthy scrutiny of petty frontier officials.

Once in the Sicilian mountains, his progress had been blocked by a lordly sabertooth—but the tawny monster decided at the last moment not to contest the passage of this evil-smelling metal intruder. After baring its foot-long fangs, it stepped proudly aside into the underbrush lining the excuse for a road.

Farther on, the Hellene had a brush with bandits who were taking advantage of the disorganization of communication to raid frontier towns.

It was in the Iberian village of Alhaba, nine days out, that the abused car expired. Careful inspection con-

vinced Teraf that it was beyond repair by the local blacksmith; moreover, the road leading west was a mere trail.

Leaving the machine to the mercies of the villagers, Teraf hurried to an inn on the shabby public square, displayed the seal of Atlan to the landlord and demanded a fast horse. That fat and greasy individual surveyed the sacred symbol indifferently, rang one of the gold coins which his visitor proffered and opined that it was false. Despite the fact that several good horses were stamping in the courtyard, he advised the Hellene to look elsewhere.



Crossing the square, Teraf interviewed the owner of the town's only other hostelry and was snubbed with equal abruptness.

As he turned to leave, the innkeeper's slatternly wife entered from a back room; on her dirty wrist was a wide gold bracelet bearing the Ibis crest.

Teraf gripped her plump arm. "Where did you get that?"

She whimpered, her eyes flickering toward her husband.

Instinctively the prince ducked, just in time to avoid a thrown bottle.

Before the dour Iberian could continue the barrage, Teraf's knife was out and he had pinned the man in a corner, with point at throat. "Where did she get it?"

"Two men... Please, sir, don't kill your servant... They passed through here yesterday... The bracelet was a gift...to hinder those who followed."

Teraf's pulse throbbed in his temples. He dragged the quaking innkeeper into the courtyard and forced

him to saddle and bridle the best of the horses. Then, after tossing several gold pieces on the ground, he spurred out of town along the trail leading west.

The going became harder with each mile. It began to rain, a slow drizzle which soaked him to the bone. The country was wild and desolate; jagged rocks flanked the slippery road and sloped up to angry mountains which had their heads wrapped in mist.

He made twenty leagues before his horse foundered; this time he was able to obtain only a sorry nag from a farmer, but he kept on through the night.

At dawn he thought he sighted the figures of two horsemen at the top of a long rise far ahead. They were gone behind a sheet of rain before he could be sure.

The Egyptian must have realized that he was being followed, for the next village turned out against Teraf with pitchforks, shovels and axes. He barely escaped with his life and lost many precious hours making a detour through swampy country.

It was on the morning of the second day after this that he caught sight of the massive Rock of Gibraltar rearing its head into the clearing skies. The white marble pyramid which served as the African buttress for Hercules masterpiece still lay hidden in the mists, but the granite dam loomed across the entrance to the Mediterranean Valley. Behind it, he knew, raged the ever-rising Atlantic Ocean.

AN HOUR before Teraf's arrival, the horsemen ahead of him had swept up the long ramp which led to the entrance of the pyramid and shouted for the guard.

In due time a sentry came out of his little box, yawning and dragging

his gun behind him. Discipline had relaxed since the dam had been cut off from the rest of the world by the destruction of Bab El. He fell, his head burned off by a shot from the taller of the newcomers.

Both men dismounted and loosed a heavy object from one of the saddles; before the startled commandant could leave his breakfast, they had gained the top of the pyramid, a flat lookout post surrounded by a low railing.

Puffing with apoplectic rage, the commandant stormed up the stairs, with the rest of a now-thoroughly-aroused guard at his back. He found his visitors standing at the edge of the platform, their backs to the thunderous Atlantic. They had placed their burden between them and were regarding him warily as he popped through a trap door.

"This is an outrage," stormed the fellow as he wiped egg from the corners of his pouting mouth. "You're under arrest." He struck an attitude.

Before the soldiers could move, Plu Toh Ra tossed an object about the size of a hand grenade over the edge of the platform. "Look!" he roared.

The missile struck the broad top of the dam and exploded in a flare of prismatic light. A section of the stone caught fire, blazed like pine for a moment, then vanished utterly. It left a hole in the top of the dam at which the ocean waves leaped hungrily.

"We are your Pharaoh," the voice boomed again. "That was merely a toy; at our feet is a bomb thousands of times more powerful. Bow down, if you wish to save the dam and your wretched lives.

"But...!" gabbled the commandant.

"But us no buts, slave. Aha, another of our pretty phrases! Bow down!"

The commandant bowed, then scuttled away, shooing before him those

of the guard who had not already fled.

"Now what?" asked Refo. The triumph of which he had dreamed for years, and which had come so easily, tasted flat in his mouth. "We've captured the Pillars, all right; but we stand to starve to death up here, unless your armies reach here before those of Atlan."

The Pharaoh did not answer. He was pacing the platform, his hawk face lifted toward the hurrying, broken clouds, as he murmured prayers of thanksgiving to Isis, Osiris and the rest of his gods.

AS THOUGH a bandage had been removed from his eyes, Refo saw, now that it was too late, that Plu Toh Ra was far from the superman the Martian worshipped since his youth. This was merely a beak-faced, heartless barbarian who itched for power with which to aggrandize himself and his priests.

Refo tried to comfort himself with the thought that soon his Hellenes could return to the freedom of their Golden Age. At the same time he recalled the privation which had descended when the factories had stopped; what if there never had been a Golden Age?

The Pharaoh finally ceased his devotions and looked at Refo as though he had been a stranger. "You still here?" he growled at last. "Begone, Alpha traitor; only Egypt must be found holding the dam when our minions arrive."

"What?" For a moment the Helene's mind refused to grasp the significance of those words. "Very well," he resumed levelly after a long moment. "I will go. But let me warn you, Pharaoh, that when the commandant recovers from his fright he will realize that you don't dare destroy the dam because you also would be destroyed. Then he will come back with a hundred guards behind him.

...You must be mad to think you can defend this platform alone."

"Mad? Who calls us mad?" screamed the Egyptian. "Begone, we say. We know you now; you're an Atlantean spy, trying to rob us of our empire Isis! Osiris! Protect us!" He scrabbled in his garments for a weapon.

Clear and cold as a knifeblade, the realization came to Refo that he was facing a man gone suddenly insane. The attainment of Plu Toh Ra's dreams had tilted still farther a mind long distorted by ambition and religious frenzy."



"Come friend," he pleaded, trying to bring the other back to reason. "You cannot succeed if you defy Atlantis alone; we must stand together. The battle is just beginning. Let us talk it over."

"Talk it over? With a spy?" belowered the madman. "Defy the Atlanteans? Ho! Who said there would be any Atlanteans to defy?" He burst into a howl of laughter.

Then, quick as one of his sacred cats, the Pharaoh leaped toward the orichalcum bomb and started dragging its heavy container to the edge of the platform.

WITH A PRAYER on his lips, Refo hurled himself at the Egyptian, but the lead box was teetering on the edge of the pyramid nearest the sea before he could break the madman's grip on its handles.

With a grunt Plu Toh Ra came erect. Refo did not give him time to reach for gun or dagger, but bored in with right and left jabs to the face and body. They grappled in the cen-

ter of the platform; as they strained and heaved, the Greek felt a rib crack—and realized that he was no match for his giant antagonist. The muscles of the frenzied man seemed made of steel.

An old wrestling trick came to him. He drove his knee into the Egyptian's groin and leaped free as Plu Toh Ra screamed in agony. But it gained only a momentary respite. Eyes blazing, his enemy came in again, arms extended for a bone-crushing grip.

Refo lost a precious second in reaching for his knife and the other was upon him. Those tree-like arms locked once more about his middle. They fell together, managing by some miracle not to roll under the railing, heaved and writhed back and forth. Refo had a slight advantage now, for the Egyptian was spending part of his energies trying to reach the bomb.

But the struggle was telling rapidly upon the Hellene. He was blinded with blood from a cut on his forehead; there came a roaring in his ears. He seemed to be breathing fire.

As his opponent weakened, Plu Toh Ra wriggled nearer and nearer the deadly box. At last he reached it with the toe of his sandal.

The bomb teetered sickly. Holding his foe with one hand now, the Pharaoh pushed again. The container scraped faintly on the marble, hesitated—then vanished over the edge.

The maniac was filled with wild delight. "Ho, proud Atlan," he gabbled, relaxing his hold somewhat on his victim. "Ho, nation of drowning rats. Ho, Refo, behold your empire. After us the deluge! Aha, a pretty phrase. Take it down, scribe!" His old habit still working its customary reaction, he glanced around for someone to write down his deathless words.

Realizing his opportunity, Refo rallied all his forces. Tearing one hand free, he snatched the Egyptian's dagger from its sheath and drove it deep under the ribs; bright blood stained barbaric vestments.

Plu Toh Ra lunged to his feet, dragging the other with him. His eyes looked into those of the Hellene and Refo saw that somehow, those eyes had returned momentarily to sanity.—that the events just passed had been forgotten.

"Ah, Hellene, you have betrayed us after all," whispered the wounded man; "we should have known better than to trust an Alfha with our dreams."

He clapped a hand to his wet side, withdrew it and stared, bemused, at the strain. His knees sagged. With a desperate effort he drew himself to his full height. "We shall die together, then," he remarked simply.

Gripping Refo tightly, he hurled himself over the railing of the pyramid.



This refilling of the Mediterranean ...knew no check; it came, faster and faster; it rose over the tree tops, over the hills, until it had filled the whole basin of the Mediterranean and until it lapped the mountain cliffs of Arabia and Africa. Far away, long before the dawn of history, this catastrophe occurred.

H. G. Wells. "Outline of History".

TERAF GALLOPED up to the bottom of the pyramid just in time to see the dam guard scuttle out like rats and to witness the last moments of that fight on the platform. He divined from the actions of the tiny figures far above that something had changed his brother—that Refo was fighting on the side of civilization.

For a time, the combatants disappeared; then came the climax when Plu Toh Ra hurled himself and his enemy over the railing. Down—down they shot together on their 1,000 foot

slide over the steep marble slope toward the ground.

Teraf ran forward, pistol in hand, determined to finish the Egyptian at all costs—if he lived through the descent. But, as they swept closer, he saw that the Pharaoh was on the bottom, his arms and legs flailing limply; Refo was clinging to the giant's chest as though trying to escape the rough spots.

When they were half way down the incline, however, there burst into the zenith from behind the wall a blaze of colors like ten thousand rainbows or an aurora borealis gone insane. This was accompanied by a roar as if all the fires of hell were burning together and followed by the telltale mushrooming cloud of a radioactive explosion.

Teraf was hurled to the ground and knocked senseless. When he recovered, it was to find that his brother and the Egyptian had fallen only a few yards away. Painfully he crawled forward and bent over them. Plu Toh Ra was quite dead, and thoroughly mangled. Refo still breathed, his arms locked about the neck of his late antagonist in a vise-like grip.

As the younger brother succeeded in separating the two, a sound like thunder called his attention to the bulging center of the dam. A long crack appeared near the top of the structure; stone spouted outward, impelled by the hydraulic pressure behind it. Sea water followed in a roaring spout, melting the remaining stone like sugar and forming a pool which spread over the ground with lightning rapidity. In moments it blocked any hope of escape across the plain.

Working desperately against time, Teraf hoisted Refo on his shoulders and bound him there with strips from the Egyptian's torn garments. Then he took the only road to temporary safety; balancing the unconscious man on his back, he started a laborious climb up a series of handholds which had been cemented into the side of

the pyramid. In a kind of frenzy he advanced under the deadweight burden.

The dam was dissolving before Teraf's eyes, but as yet the pyramid itself held firm. Boiling water was spreading in every direction below him and already lapping at the base of the tower; dense clouds of steam formed but were whipped away by a rising wind.

Up, up, and still up! His arms seemed torn from their sockets; his hands and knees were bleeding; every rung in the ladder was a new achievement and a new agony.

Teraf dared look down no longer; the slope was too steep for that. Was the flood gaining on him? Out of the corner of his eyes, he saw another section of the dam give way; the roar of waters deafened him and made his senses reel.

Once he missed a chiseled niche and swung dizzily by one hand while a crazy world spun beneath him. Hours later, it seemed, he dragged himself and his burden over the edge of the bloodstained platform.

Now what? he wondered.

The answer was...death. There could be no escape: on three sides, the pyramid breasted a whirlpool; on the fourth—the one which had connected it with the heights of the African shore—a great crack had developed through which a scythe of water was slashing. Almost all of the dam had disappeared by now, to be replaced by a foaming chute of liquid, eight miles wide and moving with the speed of a demon.

Inland, the water had spread out and was sweeping forward in a solid sheet crested with uprooted trees and even solid blocks from the dam. Already it had inundated the countryside for several miles and was plunging on toward the horizon.

TERAF STOOD up shakily, and looked about him. A mile to the north he saw the craven commandant

and his soldiers overtaken and swept away like ants before the stream from a hose; they had attempted to reach the Iberian cliffs instead of the African heights.

Now, the pyramid itself began trembling from the onrush of the ocean. Massive almost beyond belief, it still tilted ever so slightly as its foundations were undermined; in a matter of minutes it, too, would begin to dissolve.

As Teraf tried to remember forgotten boyhood prayers to Gaea and Chronos, a movement by Refo caused him to forget them and kneel quickly. The elder Hellene's eyelids flickered. Lifting his head, he caught the significance of the mad scene and burst into wrecking sobs. "I've been a fool and a traitor, Teraf," he gasped.

The latter had to put his ear close to the moving lips to catch the words. "I ask no forgiveness," Refo went on. his voice gathering force. "I committed the unpardonable sin...the sin against all mankind. I was just a boy when I first met Plu Toh Ra, shortly after you went to Mars. He painted... pictures. He told of the woes of our peoples...imaginary woes, mostly, I know now. But at that time I was a knight errant, and besides, I loved a princess. My eyes were blinded by the Pharaoh's personality, too; instead of looking about me, I believed everything he said and joined in his high quest."



He reached out a bloodstained claw and grasped the equally-damaged hand of his brother. "All this," he muttered. "May I be forever accursed, May a vulture peck at my vitals forevermore. I thought to bring light to my people; instead I brought death to a world."

His eyes fluttered shut. As the pyramid lurched and swayed, threatening at every moment to hurl them into the abyss, Teraf waited with bated breath, the tears streaming down his face.

But Refo was not dead. His lids opened again. For a moment he stared vacantly, then struggled to a sitting position. "Look!" he screamed, his eyes almost starting from their sockets. "Saved! We are saved!"

Wondering what fevered image his brother had glimpsed, Teraf glanced upward. Then he too shouted and leaped to his feet in an ecstasy of wonder. Sweeping down toward them through the tempest, descending in long, slow spirals, came a pterodactyl. From between its wings peered the white face of Pan Doh Ra.

SONNY PLAINLY had no desire to land on the rocking platform; but the girl belabored him with her fists, choked him, finally prodded him with her dagger. At last the reptile chose the lesser of two evils and came in for a landing.

"Quick," shrilled its rider as the beast clung to the railing, facing the storm and flattening its wings against the floor in order not to have them torn away. "Sling Refo across his back. There! Now get on behind him. Quick! If you love me, quick! The pyramid is sinking."

Toiling like one possessed, Teraf lifted his brother into position and bound him there as best he could. Then he gripped loose folds of skin on the bony back and mounted, while the monster eyed his wrathfully.

"Up, Sonny boy," crooned Pan Doh Ra, bending over the snake-like neck. "Up with you."

The 'dactyl flapped its wings obligingly, but did not rise. The load was too great.

"Leave me behind," Refo begged, struggling with his bonds. "Let me die here; that will save Zeus the trouble of executing me."

"Up, lazy beast," the girl shouted but to no avail.

The problem was solved for them at that moment. Slowly, but with definite purpose, the pyramid began to settle on its side. The sea rose toward them, its waves reaching out like hungry maws.

The pterodactyl squealed with terror. Its wing flapped madly. As the platform fell from under them, it caught a rush of wind and rose sluggishly into the stormy air.



*I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris
and he;*

*I galloped, Dirck galloped, we
galloped all three;*

*Behind shut the postern, the
lights sank to rest*

*And into the midnight we gal-
loped abreast.*

Robert Browning.

A HOT SUMMER morning, and a world lay dying of its own hand. It had been a fair world of green mountains, vast forests, silver streams and infrequent farms, villages and small towns.

That world had grown too quickly, too proudly, in the short century since the slender ships from Mars had settled in the valley, then near what is now the island of Crete. Barbarians objected to being lifted by their bootstraps to civilization—particularly when the boots pinched their undisciplined toes! They revolted against what they considered, rightly or not, to be exploitation by their masters. "If there's civilizing to be done," they said, "we'll manage it ourselves, thank you, even though it takes a bit longer."

Taking advantage of this vague unrest in the ten terrestrial kingdoms, which paid more or less unwilling tribute to Mars, at a time when a comet

had temporarily cut communications with the "home" planet, Plu Toh Ra of Egypt had turned Martian technology upon itself. Using radioactive materials stolen from Atlan, the colonial capital, the Pharaoh fashioned a bomb with which he had blown up the great dam between the Pillars of Heracles—the dam which held back the waters of an Atlantic Ocean swollen by the melting ice floes of a receding glacial age.

A hot summer morning, 8,000 years ago...



Now the Pharaoh's daughter and the two Hellenic brothers who loved her were clinging to the back of the last pterodactyl as, the only survivors of that epoch-ending explosion, they flapped wearily back toward Atlan in an effort to warn the valley of its doom.

The flight was a nightmare of roaring winds and ebon skies. Their overloaded flying reptile seemed to creep over the landscape—in reality, it was making a steady 75 miles an hour before a gale which had risen to aid the flood waters in their work.

"Think we'll make it?" Teraf shouted.

"If Sonny's and your strength holds," Pan Doh Ra answered. "I don't dare land to rest him, for he would never go up again with the three of us. On the other hand, I'm afraid you won't be able to hold Brother Refo in place for many hours."

"I'll manage," he gritted, easing the unconscious former king of Hellas into what he hoped was a more comfortable position on the 'dactyl's leathery back. "Can we beat the flood to Atlan, though?"

"I think so," the girl said. "The waters of the Atlantic have to spread over the entire valley as they advance; that will slow them. We should arrive a day or two before the crest. See; already we have drawn ahead!"

She pointed downward where virgin forests were bowing to the storm. Far to the rear, a white wall advanced. As they watched, it took a village in its stride. They saw a few peasants run aimlessly across the plain. Teraf only imagined he heard their screams as the torrent engulfed them.

Through the sunless day and a night unlit by moon or star, they flapped onward.

"Sonny has the homing instinct," the girl said once; "he'll head for Sais. That should take us within sight of Atlan."

Refo recovered sufficiently to sit up. The three clung together, shivering with the cold, soaked by the driving rain, yet nodding now and then from sheer exhaustion.

The elder Hellene's mind seemed to be wandering; alternately he cursed Plu Toh Ra and himself for having brought on the debacle. Finally he slept, his arms about the princess, his head on her shoulder, while Teraf supported him from the rear.

"Not a bad sort, your brother," the girl called over her shoulder, "if only he could learn to laugh. Life gets tangled up if one goes through it with a long face. You should never have left him, Teraf; he was no match for the Pharaoh.

"Poor father," she went on sadly. "If mother had lived, he would have been different, I think. She could laugh at him and make his illusions of grandeur seem ridiculous. I tried that, too, after she was gone, but I was only a little girl. For the want of a laugh, an empire was lost. Plu Toh Ra would have loved that sentence...would have had it inscribed on papyrus or marble. How he did adore those trite phrases...honestly

thought he invented them. When I told him they were as old as the Nile, he beat me."

"You loved him, then?" Teraf was frankly puzzled.

"Why—yes, I guess I did, in a way. He was all I had after mother died. If Zeus hadn't been a dear, soft-hearted old fool he would have disciplined my Pharaoh years ago; that would have put an end to his ambitions. When I was a child, before the high priest began to whisper in his ear, he wasn't so bad. Let that be his epitaph."

She was silent, while Sonny's wings flapped above and below them with monotonous regularity. Teraf touched her shoulder. "May I laugh with you, if we get out of this?"

She reached back and squeezed his hand.

DAWN CAME, a ragged whitening of the sullen clouds. With it, Sonny seemed to lose the mechanical smoothness of his flight; the rhythm of his wing-stroke faltered again and again. But under the admonishments of Pan Doh Ra, the 'dactyl always managed to pick up the swing, as though he realized that heroic efforts were expected of him. Now and then he whimpered, however, and turned his hideous head back to stare at his mistress with red-rimmed eyes.

"We'd better lighten ship," said the princess at last. "I should have thought of it before."

She kicked off her sandals and tore from her throat and wrists the priceless necklaces and bracelets which adorned them, tossing the jewels away without a sigh.

Teraf, and Refo, who had awakened by now, followed her example by casting away their weapons and shoes.

Sonny squealed as if in appreciation; the beat of his wings steadied.



It was three o'clock that afternoon

before the crooked mountain surmounting Atlan was revealed to them by a ray of sunlight which flashed providentially through a break in the clouds.

"We're making it," shouted the girl.

The cry seemed to rattle the pterodactyl. It winced and turned glazed eyes toward them. The beat stopped. The black wings shot upward; they were falling like a plummet.

"He's gone," shrieked Pan. The beast's head was flopping loosely. "Goodbye Teraf. Goodbye Refo. I've tried..."

Then, as the ground whirled up to meet them, Sonny made his last effort. His bat-wings started their beat again; he pulled up several hundred feet from the ground and went on.

The princess screamed with joy. To lighten the burden still further she tore off her already scanty garments and rode before them, nude as dawn; Refo and Teraf followed her example.

For a few minutes the wings steadied to almost their old, tireless swing. Atlan, beautiful in its groves, its marble porticos and blue, encircling canals, came swiftly nearer. Teraf saw that the streets were decorated with flags and filled with people.

Pan spoke to her steed then, starting him on a long glide toward the palace grounds. Wild with excitement, she turned and, over Refo's shoulder, kissed Teraf full on the lips.

"We'll save them yet," she cried. "Given two days, they can escape to the highlands of Crete and Sicily or build makeshift boats and float to safety."

But something was wrong with Sonny again. Wings stiffly extended but his great head sagging, he quivered and jerked so that his riders had to cling tightly. Lower and lower he swept in a straight, steep glide. Teraf could see the upturned faces of the crowds below and the guns of the fortress swinging to bear on them.

The princess pled wildly with her

mount, beat him with her fists, prodded with the dagger. There was no response. The glide continued.

"We'll miss the palace," she cried. ... "We're falling into a canal," she screamed a second later.

The inner band of water, its bridges lined with watchers, caromed toward them. They were so close that Teraf could see the open-mouthed wonder on the faces...

They struck with a terrific splash. One of the wings crumpled back, wrapping Teraf in its rubbery folds. The waters closed over his head. He struggled desperately for a moment, then relaxed. It was too much trouble; he was tired...



*Which removeth the mountains,
and they know not: which over-
turneth them in his anger.*

*Which shaketh the earth out of
her place and the pillars thereof
tremble.*

Job, 8-5 and 6.

"**G**REAT Land of Nod!" Teraf heard the words as he pitched and rolled on a red hot gridiron in hell. "He's coming 'round after all."

The Hellene opened his eyes and stared blankly—at the ground. The agony continued; he turned his head to discover Hermes kneeling across his body, pumping firmly on his ribs.

Water poured from his nose and mouth. He spluttered and fought. At that Hermes released him and rolled him over. "Wh—what you trying to do?" Teraf gasped. Then, as memory returned, "Where are the others?"

"They're safe, up at the palace." The chronicler was all grins. "Knocked out cold by the crash but coming around. Had the devil's own

time dragging you from under that carcass; thought you were done for." He mopped his perspiring face and leaned weakly against a buttress of the nearby bridge.

Someone threw a robe over Teraf's nakedness. He sat up, blinking at a throng of blurred faces about him. The faces started spinning and blacked out.

"Easy now," he heard Hermes saying. "Lie down; I'll get a stretcher. A good sleep should bring you 'round all right."

"Sleep!" The horror of what impended cleared the prince's head. He dragged himself to his feet. "The flood is coming; Heracles' dam has been smashed. Take me to the Pitar at once."

Instantly he realized his mistake. After a frozen moment the faces about him paled. Then there was a puzzled muttering which broke into frenzied shouts.

"The dam! The dam is out!" screamed an Alpha who was first to understand the implication. "Flee for your lives! The ocean is coming."

The shout was taken up by others. The crowd milled about, then started racing across the bridge in blind panic. Screams rent the air; within seconds, people were being pushed over the balustrades by the crush.

Teraf's knees buckled, but Hermes slipped an arm around his shoulders and held him up. Together they started running toward the palace, which lay a quarter of a mile through the park. As they went, the strength of despair flowed into the Hellene and lent wings to his feet.

"What are the flags and crowds for," he managed to gasp as they raced up a broad driveway.

"Bab El— Been repaired. Power goes on in an hour. Feast Day. All that."

"Too late."

"I know. But what a scoop this is for the *Planet*...the last scoop."

They stumbled up a flight of steps,

through the reception-hall, burst past the guards before the audience chamber door and literally fell into the presence of the monarch, who was holding a consultation with Athena and Heracles.

Athena screamed at the sight. Heracles leaped forward and caught the messenger of doom as he slumped.

Word by word, Teraf panted out his story while Hermes, sprinted for the vision screen to get his last scoop to the *Planet*.

"...have at most two days," the Hellene concluded.

TEARING Hermes away from the visor in the midst of his story, Zeus spun the dials until Vulcan's face appeared on the screen. "Turn the power on immediately," he thundered. "Damn the danger" (as the engineer began to protest). "Turn on the power instantly; the dam has been broken and the flood is coming."

General Ares was called next; the Pitar shot him close-clipped orders to make ready the flying fleet, load the ships with refugees and unload at Crete. "Come back and load again," he concluded; "keep it up till your men drop."

"Can't save a tithe of them now," the warlord barked. "City's in an uproar already. Streets jammed. Panic. Do best we can."

"Cut in the public screens as soon as the power comes on, then. Warn everybody to make for the mountains. Take any other measures necessary," Zeus was continuing, when an imperative screaming from the machine caused him to make rapid adjustments.

"The power's on," he cried over his shoulder; "I'll try to reach Sicily."

There was a nerve-wracking delay, but at last the scared face of the Sicilian commandant appeared. "Yes," he babbled, "the water's almost here. It will be pouring through the valleys within a few hours. We're evacuating

to the mountains. Some may escape."

The Pitar whirled. "It's coming faster than we thought," he snapped. "We don't have much more than twenty-four hours. Athena, take over here and warn your colonies. The entire valley is doomed, tell them; only the mountains offer safety. Tell them the power's on, and to use every means of transport...build rafts...anything."

"Heracles," he shouted at the engineer, who had been sobbing windily. "Stop that blubbering; get down to the military section and help Ares. 'Hermes, you may have the screen when Athena finishes. Tell your paper to issue extras and handbills showing the best routes to the highlands, if it can get anybody to man the presses. If it can't, go down and man them yourself."



"Teraf, help Hermes if you are able; if not, report to Dr. Vanya."

Hermes looked at Athena for a moment, then shook his head and turned toward the door. As Teraf started to follow him to the *Planet* offices, Zeus slipped an arm about his shoulders.

"Good work, my boy," he said sadly. "No one could have done more. You say your brother has redeemed himself somewhat. I'm glad; always did say he was a good man gone wrong. I'll put him to work if he recovers. Drop in and see your princess before you go into the city. Better get some clothes, too."

IT WAS only then that Teraf realized he was still wearing but a cloak. One of the guards brought him his harness and he slipped into it before hurrying to the infirmary.

"I'm glad! I'm glad!" Pan Doh Ra sobbed incoherently as she clung to him. "Oh, Teraf. You're all right? I love you. Poor Sonny. Is Refo safe?... Half my own people will drown in the lowlands of the Nile. Have I done enough to atone for the Pharaoh's sin?... I love you."

Disregarding a hovering nurse, he managed to restore her composure. But now a new problem presented itself. The girl scrambled out of bed and announced that she did not intend to leave her lover.

It was useless to argue. "Where you go, I go," she declared. "I'll never let you out of my sight again; you always get into trouble when I do. If we die tomorrow, we'll at least die together." Taking his arm, she led him out of the room.

At the vantage-point of the palace facade, they halted for a moment to stare out over the city. Its streets were black with people. A faint clamor of shouting rose from the crowds.

Already the suburban plains were alive with fugitives. Radio cars drove madly through unfortunates fleeing on foot. The dread which had overwhelmed Atlan ever since the oceans had started their slow rise a century before had left no room for doubt of the catastrophe, once the rumor had spread.

As they watched, the first airships, laden to the rails, took off from the military circle, skimmed over the city and head for Crete.

"Tens of thousands will be saved," whispered Teraf as he guided his sweetheart into the repulsion car reserved for use on royal command.

"And millions will die." Her tired face was wet with tears.

A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.

Job, 10-22



THE CAR took them through the military sector. But the bridges across the second canal into the city proper were jammed with wild-eyed humanity; they had to fight the rest of their way on foot.

Under the stress of the panic, Atlan's police system had broken down. Here and there frantic patrolmen, in their distinctive green trappings, struggled vainly to keep the crowds in some sort of order. Teraf saw one officer stop in the midst of an impassioned harangue, throw up his arms and begin screaming; he had been caught, like millions of others, in the universal hysteria.

A few barbarians, who could not grasp the impending disaster, were looting deserted warehouses as they passed through the second circle. They eyed Pan Doh Ra's dark beauty like buyers at a slave-mart, but drew back when Teraf placed a hand on his pistol.

Weary from battling the mobs which fought to storm the hangars and greater throngs which, carrying what few belongings they could salvage, were heading for the suburbs, Teraf and the girl staggered at last through the *Planet* building's imposing portals. They found the offices seething with hysterical, but well-directed activity; the presses were roaring with the final edition—an Extra printed entirely in red. Its headlines played down the disaster and implored the populace to "be calm." Inside were reassuring statements by government leaders, mocked by maps of the best routes to safety.

Teraf located a sweating Hermes. He dragged them into the broadcasting studios and put them to work with a group of superficially-calm

young men whose duty it was to do their utmost to quiet the panic. For hours they begged the unheeding masses of humanity on the streets to build rafts and made impossible promises of rescue for all.

As the sun went down, and the evening passed with sickening rapidity, the staff began to dwindle; here and there, reporters rose from their work, glanced guiltily about and hurried out.

Seeing this, Nubro, the *Planet's* editor, began wandering about the offices, soothing his men, dropping words of advice and cracking jokes. Many a reporter with fear-whitened lips took a new grip on himself, and turned back to continue his hoarse and useless shouting to the stampeding crowds.

But Nubro could not be everywhere at once. It was hardly midnight when he approached the three friends, gripped Hermes and Teraf by the hands and said, as though commenting on the weather: "You folks had better get back to the palace; the printing staff is entirely gone. I'll try to hold a few men to continue broadcasting until dawn. You can do nothing more here."

He escorted them to the door and waved a grim farewell as they dived into the mob.



THE CONFUSION was even worse than when they had come. There were now two struggling currents of refugees. One stream was hurrying toward the military sector, confident of escape in the airships; an equal number, haggard from wasting precious hours at the jammed bridges, were fighting their way toward the open country.

Endless traffic-jams and savage,

reasonless fights were taking place. The bright streets, that morning filled with merry-makers, were strewn with personal belongings and occasional battered bodies. Serene on the rooftops, an occasional skeptic watched the battle, confident that the flood could never come.

The bridges to the military sector were completely jammed, by now; for blocks, a packed mass of humanity screamed and begged to cross. From time to time the heavy bridge gates were opened for a few seconds to allow several thousand lucky ones to enter, then crowded shut again by husky soldiers. To prevent anyone from swimming the canal and overpowering the military, fire-screens had been turned partly on; their lurid ways lent an unearthly glow to the scene.

For a time, the exhausted trio tried to fight a way through the mob. It was no use; those they tried to displace struck at them with fists or knives.

Hermes, his hand over his incompletely-healed wound, sank to the ground.

"There's no way through that mob unless we can fly," he gasped. "Shall we head for the open country?"

"Might be a way under," hazarded Teraf. "The catacombs..."

"The catacombs!" Hermes struggled to his feet. "What a super-idiot I am. Come on; let's try them, anyway. There's an entrance near here."

Under his guidance they entered a deserted warehouse, squeezed through a slit in the cellar wall and found themselves in a damp, bone-filled tunnel.

"I'm not sure," the chronicler hesitated. "I've been down here with a torch, but it's different in the dark. Come on, though; it's our only chance."

Joining hands, they crept along the passage. Again and again their feet crushed through ancient skeletons, or

they bumped painfully into rocks and beams fallen from the roof.

"There should be an exit about here if we took the right turning," Hermes muttered at last. "We should have passed under the canal. Where is that damned exit? My matches are all gone. We'll have to separate and feel along the walls. All of us must shout at intervals."

They wandered about, testing the mouldy walls with their hands, disturbing flights of bats, gasping in the putrid air. And all the while, precious minutes were passing and unreasoning fear that the waters might come and drown them like rats in a burrow was growing upon them. At times Teraf had to bite his lips to keep from howling.

At first they kept close together; but as the chambers branched, they were forced to separate farther and farther, still keeping in touch by shouts.

At last Teraf shouted Pan Doh Ra's name and got no answer.

"Pan! Pan!" he called again and again, but only the rustling of the wings of bats he had disturbed answered him.

A hand gripped his arm. It was that of Hermes, who had returned from an excursion into a dead-end tunnel. "Which way was she when you last heard her?" he demanded.

"Straight ahead... I think."

"Come on, then."

For an infinity they cast about shouting. When it seemed that all hope was lost, a faint hail responded to theirs. They ran forward, stumbling over rocks and phosphorescent bone piles.

"Pan!" shouted Teraf after a particularly mad scramble had left him bruised and bleeding.

"Here," answered the faraway ghost of voice. "I've found a crack in the wall, I think; there's a draft coming in."

A FEW moments later she was in the Hellene's arms, shaking as

with the ague. "I got lost," she sobbed. "Couldn't make you hear me. I must have fainted, I guess. When I came to, there was a faint breath of air fanning my face."

They explored frantically. Finally the chronicler gave a whoop. "Here it is; we must have missed it by inches before. Follow me."

"Looks like rain," he panted inanely as they stood in the open shortly thereafter, filling their lungs in great gasps.

Indeed, lightning was flashing in the west. Huge banks of cloud, pierced through by forks of flame, were creeping rapidly toward the zenith.

They became conscious once more of the imploring voice of the populace from across the canal. In the glow of the fire screens, thousands of pale faces were turned toward the hangars near which they now stood. Those in the front rank stretched out imploring arms; mothers lifted babies so they might be seen. Occasionally the crush became so great that people were pushed into the canal, there to die in the boiling waters.

Turning away from that ghastly scene, the three found their way to the War Lord. Ares was in his element as he stood, legs wide, hands behind back, in the midst of his officers, shouting laconic instructions regarding the loading of his ships.

"Not needed here," he grunted when they had managed to reach his side. "Job for the military." But as they turned to go, he held up his hand imperiously. "One moment. Ship being withdrawn for use in rescuing those at palace. Help provision it."

Then he thawed for a moment and gripped the hand of each in turn. "Good luck. May not meet again. Appreciate your spirit." He jerked away and began shouting orders as before.

A subaltern led them to the appointed ship, a war-cruiser capable of carrying 500 refugees; it left its moorings as the watching citizens screamed in disappointment. A short

while later it descended on the plain surrounding Bab El Tower.

As they alighted, the storm broke in a downpour of rain and roar of shifting winds.

For hours they moved between the power station, the palace and the ship, carrying provisions, weapons, light machinery, important records and many lead orichalcum containers. Nothing was forgotten which would tend to make life easier for the exiles-to-be. Over their heads as they worked charged endless flights of ships going and coming from the military sector. Even the *Poseidon*, clumsy though she was for anything but inter-planetary travel, had been pressed into service, they noted, and was carrying thousands to safety.

DESPITE the fact that she had not slept for days, Pan Doh Ra worked like a man, thrusting her streaming shoulders against bales and boxes, sometimes throwing herself down on the flooded ground for a brief rest, but always arising to join her lover.

"For the first time in my life I'm doing useful labor," she called out once. And again: "This is better than being a princess on bread and water. but I must look pretty awful."

As the blinding storm let up for an interval, Teraf realized that a man toiling beside him was Refo. The brothers gripped hands silently, then went on with their work.

A bleak dawn was filtering through the clouds when Vulcan reported that the ship could carry no more cargo and was ready to load passengers.

He called Teraf, Refo and Pan Doh Ra to him. Together they splashed down to the palace, entering the audience chamber to find Zeus still tinkering with the visor dial. Hera's plump body was occupying her throne. The Pitaress, who usually went about in a fever of excitement, had become calm in the crisis and was speaking words of encouragement to her harrassed spouse.

The ruler glanced at the newcomers through red-rimmed eyes, then turned back to the controls. "Been trying to get the commandant at Albia," he said over his shoulder. "Looks as if they had been flooded."

"But Albia is only a little more than forty leagues from Atlan," Vulcan exploded. "If it is flooded, we have only three or four more hours; it's time to get everyone aboard."

For a moment longer Zeus twisted the dials, then turned away from the useless machine.



Soon the cable cars which connected the palace with the top of Crooked Mountain were filled with the royal household, palace attendants, soldiers and officials. They came quietly, but all turned their faces, whenever possible, toward their former home.

The Pitar and his council stood in the Bab El control room at last, surveying those who had worked with him so well for so many decades—who had witnessed with him, most of them, the rise and fall of the greatest empire the world had ever known.

"We have done our best, friends," he said to them quietly, "I thank you. Of course our exile will be only temporary; communications will be re-established with Mars in a few months or years. Then Atlantis will grow mightier than before.

"Until then, we shall be forced to live in some region out of reach of the waters. I suggest the mountains of Hellas. Athena, do you approve?"

"That would be safest," his silvery-haired daughter nodded. "We should be able to establish ourselves there, now that Refo has rejoined us. The Hellenes like me; they will have, I believe, a wholesome respect for us if we use them fairly. Besides, since Hellas is the weakest spot in the em-

pire except Egypt, we should settle there and try to revive their loyalty so that the glory of Atlantis may be more quickly revived if...when communications are restored."

"It certainly would be a good idea to have those shameless Hellenes where we could watch them," Hera burst out. "I always said..." Zeus shook his grey head and his wife subsided.

"Are we all here?" asked the Pitar. He glanced about the room, checking off those present.

Vulcan hesitated. "What of Aphrodite?"

"I had forgotten," Zeus admitted, shamefaced as though he had been caught in a major crime. "She is confined to her quarters. Apollo, go fetch her."

A FEW MOMENTS later, the woman who had made the deluge possible entered the room. Unlike all the others, who were reeling with fatigue, she was carefully gowned and her gorgeous hair was bound with a silver fillet. But she was pale under her rouge and seemed smaller than when they had last seen her. And there were faint lines on the oval face.

"Kill me. Kill me," she moaned, kneeling at her father's feet and resting her head on the floor. "I am not fit to live."

Teraf, listening, detected the same theatrical note as of old. *She's playing the martyr now*, he thought, and his lips curled. The others drew back as though she might contaminate them, but Zeus gently lifted her up and slipped his arm around her shoulders. "Too late for that, my dear."

Aphrodite heaved a fluttering sigh and threw her bare round arms about him. The Pitar's mood changed at the gesture. He shook her off brusquely and turned to give orders for the exodus.

The last council on the soil of Atlantis was held in that little office. Just outside, the black hulk of the warship gleamed in the downpour.

Vulcan was the first speaker. Bal-

ancing on his crippled legs, he looked at everyone in turn and then said simply: "Two of us must stay here, Your Pitarship. The power machinery will go out of balance at once, if left to operate by itself. I must stay, of course, but I need one assistant. He does not have to be an engineer; he will only pull levers and carry out my instructions. I would ask one of my own men to stay, but each of them has a family, and I would not separate them...I would prefer an unmarried man.

"Who will volunteer," asked Zeus.

Every person in the room stepped forward. Even Aphrodite, an hysterical light in her green eyes, begged permission to die in this heroic fashion. Heracles also was insistent.

Zeus shook his head at both of them.

"No, Heracles," he said, "I will need your engineering knowledge in Hellas; 'then, patting the hand of his daughter, 'Such a death would be too noble for you, my dear.'"

"The quiet simplicity of paradise would never suit your tastes. Besides. I would be helpless without you to care for me." The last words seemed to give him pause. "But my life is about over; why shouldn't I stay?" He looked hard at Vulcan. "Two old friends, dying together."

"If I can't stay, neither can you, sir," growled Heracles, flexing his muscles.

THERE WAS a movement in the tightly-packed group and Refo pushed his way forward. "It's not your duty but mine, Pitarship; all this could not have happened except for me. I must stay."

"So be it," said Zeus after a moment's thought. Then to the others. "Come; it's time to go."

Pan Doh Ra stepped forward, her dark hair gleaming wetly in the pale morning light. Behind her stood Teraf.

"One more request, Father Zeus," she smiled wanly. "I am Queen of Egypt now. I also am partially re-

sponsible for this...for this mess. I've been talking to Teraf. We agree that if you lend us a small ship, we'll go to Sais instead of Hellas and try to hold Egypt for the Empire. The Hellenes love and will obey Athena; you'll not need Teraf."

Again the Pitar considered, to nod at last.

"You're a smart girl, Pan." He pressed her hand. "My private ship, which holds two passengers only, is in the palace hangar. Take it." He motioned Teraf to advance and, almost bashfully, laid a hand on each of their heads in the old Pitaric blessing.

"Time's up," Vulcan interrupted. "Two hours at most before the flood reaches Atlan, and possibly another two before it becomes deep enough to submerge the power station. You'd best go at once; when the station is wrecked, power will drain out of the ether like water through a sieve. Your ships will have time enough to land after that happens, but no more. If you go at once you may reach Hellas and Egypt."

Oppressed by a sadness greater than they had ever known, the little company filed by the crippled engineer and the tall, dark Hellene who now stood at his side, gripping their hands and saying a few inadequate words of farewell before passing out into the rain to be shepherd aboard ship by Mars and his lieutenants.

As Pan Doh Ra stepped forward, Refo dropped to his knees and, seizing her hands, covered them with kisses.

"I am beneath notice because I believed the worst of you," he whispered so softly that the others could not hear. "No, don't say you forgive me" as she opened her lips to object; "I'm not worth forgiveness. Only remember that I loved you, even when I said I hated you. But Teraf cares for you more than I know how to. You will be happy together."

He rose, gripped his brother's arms for a moment, then fled into the interior of the station.



And behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead: And I only am escaped to tell thee.

Job, 10-19

THE RULERS of Atlantis filed slowly into the streaming black ship which already housed all the other refugees from the inner circle.

Zeus was the last to go. For a long minute he stood staring out over his rain-washed empire; Atlan blazed with lights, which were only partially dimmed by the illumination pouring out of the ship's open hatches. The cries of the city's inhabitants were muted by distance. From the military zone, laden ships were still departing for Crete as empty ones returned to assume new burdens.

The Pitar bowed his grey head, placed the tips of his fingers to his brow, then limped up the nearest ramp. The door closed behind him with an irrevocable hiss of compressed air.

From the office, Teraf and Pan watched the hull rise lazily from its muddy resting place. At the altitude of 300 feet it circled the mountain, then turned toward the northeast. In seconds it was lost among clouds.

"This is no time for weeping," the girl sobbed as she slipped cold fingers into her lover's hand. "They'll make Athens; we must be sure to reach Sais. Let's go."

They clambered into the cable-car and dropped silently toward the shining palace. As they dashed through its echoing corridors, they were startled by a faint yapping from Aphrodite's chambers. Teraf pushed open the door. Inside crouched a little dog,

whimpering with loneliness and that uncannily foreknowledge of disaster which brutes have.

Scooping up the foregotten pet, the Hellene followed Pan Doh Ra toward the Pitar's roof hangar. There it took only a few moments to push the slim, cigar-shaped flier out on its runway and to squeeze into a little cabin. Soon they were circling above the city, the dog nestling under the girl's robe.



The seething crowds on the streets of Atlan looked for all the world like ants in a suddenly-disturbed hill. The entire countryside also was alive with minute pedestrians—motorists long since had reached safety or deserted their mired vehicles. All the refugees were heading northward toward the mountains across fields which had been churned into quagmires.

Over this scene, airships continued to dash back and forth on their errands of mercy; General Ares would not stop them until there was just time for the last passengers to reach safety.

Teraf recalled his first glimpse of Atlan when he had returned from Mars such a few weeks before. Except for the mob, the scene looked much the same. Then the street lights had been on because of the gloom. Now they gleamed forgotten—as they would do until the waters descended. Beacons were flashing as usual in the military circle; marble buildings gleamed white in the rain.

"Won't we wake up soon and find that this is a dream...that everything is as it used to be?" breathed Pan. "Surely no flood can destroy all this power...all this beauty."

Teraf turned the ship toward Egypt and gave it full power. As he did so there came a momentary rift in the

clouds which allowed a warm shaft of sunlight to illuminate the city; clear as a cameo it lay, a gem on a strip of green velvet.

He heard the girl sobbing.

The beam of sunlight passed on, swept westward. In the far distance it flashed across a white line, was advancing majestically.

The clouds closed again; the vision faded.

FOR TWO HOURS they flew, crossing the Egyptian frontier at last and rapidly approaching their destination. A half hour more would see them safely landed at Sais.

It was then that Pan Doh Ra, who had been weeping softly with her head on her lover's shoulder, looked up and made a discovery. There was a tiny vision screen on the ship's instrument board.

"There's a screen in the Bab El engineroom," she exclaimed as she manipulated the visor dials. "I must try to tell Refo that I *do* forgive him; I'll never sleep again if I don't."

Several minutes passed without a response to their call. Then a blur of light appeared on their four-inch screen. It swirled, brightened and finally coalesced to show the Bab El control room.

Vulcan and Refo were there, working furiously in water which reached to their ankles. In the background, generators and transformers purred smoothly. "Refo!" cried the princess.

The Hellene looked up, lifted one hand to his forehead as he caught sight of her on his own screen, then hurried to help the hunchbacked engineer, who was frantically shifting dampers in the pile which occupied the rear wall of the room.

When this task was done, Refo turned back to the screen.

"Can you make it to Sais?" he inquired calmly.

"Yes," the two refugees spoke together. And Teraf added through dry

lips. "We're only about twenty leagues away, now."

"Good." Refo might have been talking about the weather. "The city is gone... tidal wave hit it half an hour ago." He staggered as the engine room door burst open and the water about him gushed higher.

"When you feel the power weaken, go into a steep glide," interrupted Vulcan. Having completed his last act as engineer of Bab El, he waded forward and now stood beside his helper, mopping his bald head. "That way you should be able to land before the ether drains."

"Can't you still get away?" cried Teraf in a sudden frenzy as he recalled what he had forgotten before—that a two-place flier was always kept at the top of Crooked Mountain.

The cripple shrugged as he leaped to a switchboard to make an adjustment.

"The pile would blow in two minutes if left to itself," he replied stoically. "The military ships are still in the air on their last flight and the Pitar's party hasn't landed yet. We're in for it. Good luck to you. Remember about that glide." He stumbled away through the hip-deep flood.

"Refo." screamed Pan Doh Ra as the Hellene turned to follow. "Listen! I do forgive you. Goodbye."

The face of the man in the engine room lighted. He sloshed forward as though trying to touch her. His face magnified until it filled the tiny screen. "Thank you, my love," he called.

A roar of falling waters filled the loudspeaker. For a second Refo's exalted face flickered on the screen; then a click and the instrument went dead.

The ship's engines faltered and the nose started to come up. It steadied as Teraf adjusted the controls for a glide toward the Sais airport. Tenderly he slipped his arm around Pan's shaking shoulders and kissed her dark hair.



L'ENVOI

Chief: ... You see the end of things.

*The power of a thousand kings
Helped us to this, and now the power
Is so much hay that was a flower.*

*Lucius: We have been very great
and strong.*

Chief: That's over now.

Lucius: It will be long

Before the world will see our like.

Chief: We've kept the thieves beyond the dyke

A good long time, here on the wall...

*Lucius: Colonel, we ought to sound
a call*

To make an end of this.

Chief: We ought.

*Look—there's the hill-top where we
fought*

*Old Foxfoot. Look—there in the whin.
Old ruffian knave! Come on. Fall in!*

John Masefield's The Frontier.

ATHENS. HERMES to his friend Teraf—greetings and health.

Your messenger has just arrived, after more than a year of wandering over what is left of Arabia. The other messengers you speak of never got through.

Strange how distances stretch out now—into infinity. And time stretches too. Ten years since the flood! Great Land of Nod!

You ask me to visit you in Sais, but I fear that is impossible—though if things get worse here I may change my mind. They need me in Hellas, these queer people who have suddenly become very old and helpless; who dream of past greatness more and more as the years creep by.

We are established, as perhaps you

have heard, on Mount Olympus, not far from Athens. We landed there safely, just before the power failed. Your old capital was completely destroyed by the flood and the earthquakes and storms which followed. A new Athens has been built by refugees farther up in the mountains, but it is a sorry place made up mostly of stone huts and a few tottering temples. Perhaps in time...

Heracles has built a palace of sorts for the court on top of Olympus, where defense is easy. Marble and all that, but no running water or conveniences. Cockroaches in the kitchens! Bugs in the bedrooms! Terrible, in fact. I can't stand the place, and am living in the proverbial vine-covered cottage half a league to the south. Have a wife now...a little girl from Attica. You'd like her.

I go up to the palace each week and publish my own version of the *Planet*...mostly a scandal sheet about court gossip. Put it out on a crazy flat-bed press I made myself. I preach the gospel of hope... Tell them that communication soon will be restored and that the Anarchiate will send help...all that sort of rot. The fact is, of course, that the meteor-belt shows no signs of clearing; not a ship can get through. And last week Mars stopped calling us. Our miserable radar station isn't strong enough to answer them so the Anarchiate has sent through a message saying that, since no reply has been received from Earth since the flood, it is presumed that everyone in Atlan perished.

We have perished, really, and I know it. But I feel so sorry for Zeus and the rest of them, that I put on a brave face and scurry about acting as messenger and quartermaster for their eternal intrigues. The Hellenes tolerate me because they think I have a charmed life or something; but they call me a thief, and block every effort I make to salvage machinery and other remnants of the old culture.

What few factories escaped the catastrophe are falling apart now; no power. The natives wear skins and

eke out a miserable existence by farming the rocky valleys and raising sheep on the mountain slopes. What was the use of all that education they received under the empire? They make no use of it.

Athena, bless her soul, still has some influence over them. She tries to maintain a few schools. If you ask me, they are a waste of time, except that they keep her busy. She's really splendid, though. Perhaps I'm too pessimistic; her simple teachings may make the Hellenes a great race in generations to come...if the barbarians don't finish them first.

I ALMOST wish Hercules had let Zeus stay with Vulcan. The Pitar isn't the man he used to be. Grows a bit senile, poor chap; has illusions that he is still ruler of the earth... when he is not planning how to restore the empire or winning new enemies among the populace by making love to the Hellenic girls.



Hera is fatter than ever, and just as jealous. Still has her receptions, although nobody but the Atlanteans go. But Zeus was right when he said he couldn't live without her; she waits on him hand and foot, now that attractive servants are hard to find.

Aphrodite has aged terribly, particularly since she has been replaced by Medea as official court vampire. Yes, the Argonauts escaped, even though their ship did crash on its way back to Atlan. All of them finally made their way here, where their *good* right arms have been much needed, I can tell you. Theseus is talking of having another *Argo* built, so he can sail to Africa after pitchblende with which to make orichalcum, but I doubt that anything will come of that. The last word we got from Zim Bab-

we was that savages were storming the city. Nothing since then. Of course, there are pitchblende deposits in the Caucasus. Maybe...

Getting back to Medea, she leads Jason a sorry life—due to the fact, I suppose, that she never became queen of Iberia after all. She also messes around with Egyptian spells, which don't work, and Egyptian poisons, which do. Lately she took a fancy to Heracles, but he couldn't be bothered, so I'm afraid he is in for trouble. Zeus has sent him to do some cleanup work around Hellas, in order to get him out of harm's way for a while; I hear that he has greatly impressed the natives with his feats of strength.

Poor old Herc. He's a good civil engineer, of course, but what we need is a nuclear physicist—and electronics are just beyond him. Can't get the workings of an atomic pile through his big head. Sits and puzzles over plans, and talks about rebuilding Bab El—but it's all Hellenic to him. I try to help, but I'm a chronicler, not a chemist. The few real engineers who escaped from Bab El are not up to it either, without Vulcan's help. How we miss the old man!

Thank Gaea and Chronus for Ares, though; he and most of his men managed to reach Crete on that last flight of warships. He's with us now, curt and authoritative as ever, but a real tower of strength when the natives threaten to get nasty.

FUNNY THING. The Hellenes have come to regard us as malignant supermen—almost as gods. So does the old order change. They hate us, though they respect us—thanks to Zeus' thunderbolts, as they call our guns. We brought enough orichalcum to charge those weapons for so long as we last, so I anticipate no real trouble.

The people have a sneaking admiration for Athena and Heracles—but, strange to say, Refo has become their real idol. They've got the whole story

twisted, somehow; he is no longer the misguided king who brought about the destruction of a world, but a demigod who strove with the high gods and failed. They've even given him a new name—call him Prometheus, the forethinker.

They have carved a statue of him in chains on the mountain facing Olympus. Growsome sight it is, with the vultures nesting around it; a constant reminder of our sorrows. The Hellenes say, of course, that the vultures are sent by Zeus to torture their hero.

All kinds of hocus-pocus stories have been built around him; Refo is to return soon, they say, and lead his people back to the Golden Age. Solar-myth stuff, you see, but I suppose it helps them forget their empty bellies.

Incidentally, I would not advise you to visit Athens just now; you've become a solar-myth, too, my boy. The natives have you classified as the traitor who stole his brother's sweetheart and caused the latter's failure in his struggle to steal atomic fire from the gods. They think of you as being eternally bowed down by the weight of your misdeeds. I might add that they've even changed your name to fit the story. You are now Epimetheus, the afterthinker. As for Pan Doh Ra... Well!

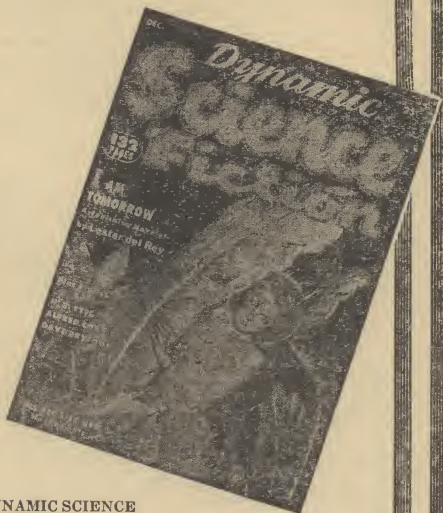
Glad to hear from your messenger that things are holding up so well in Egypt. You have a civilization there that you can sink your teeth into. It isn't much, compared to Atlantis; but it's better than this barbarian hole and may be able to carry the torch until civilization has a chance to recover from its shock or until Mars gets through to us again. Just don't let the Arabs or the Ethiopians gobble you in the meantime.

Well, good luck. It's growing too dark to write, and we have no electricity here. Give my love to Pan.

Farewell.



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tice they wore small, triangular holsters at their side. "It's a little rugged for a stranger," said Phil.

"I am to choose a mate," said Wooha, but only Yabor and Zileto understood her. "Your qualities make me indifferent to the choice; I leave you to settle it between yourselves."

Yabor had suspected this would be her answer and he had been ready.

"Go," said Wooha.

Yabor's hand streaked to his holster. But Phil, if he had not known, caught on quickly, his fist shot out, struck Yabor on the chin. The miner went down to the rocky surface of the dias. His head struck it with a dull sound, like a melon being broken on the sidewalk.

Phil turned to Zileto. The seaman's hand had already drawn the gun from its holster, but now he stopped. He replaced the weapon and folded his arms. "Yella," said Phil.

Giulle ran forward and examined Yabor with the broken head. "He

will live for several hours," said Giulle to Wooha; "I pronounce you man and wife."

The women assembled clapped their hands and Phil turned and bowed. When he turned around, the gorillas were carrying off Yabor on the litter, and Wooha was following—her face as calm and immobile as before.

Phil could not understand. He started to go in pursuit of the woman he had won in mortal combat, but Giulle stopped him.

"She has gone away with her husband," said Giulle. "In three hours she will eat him."

Phil could not understand. Nor did he seem to grasp the fact that the applauding women around him were widows. Not black widows—just olive widows of Valeria, with red eyes and white hair. On his own planet, cannibals wore bones in their noses, and only spiders ate their mates.

Down To Earth

(continued from page 10)

zine last week; it was the issue for May (Vol. 3, No. 1). Most of the stories were interesting, but I am fascinated by the one called "Thy Days are Numbered" by Wallace West. Here, now, is a writer! Purely aside from the writing itself, which is colorful, sparkling and fast-moving, I was intrigued by the research and wide imagination which must have gone into the plot.

Or is Wallace West really trying to tell us something? Is there more to the story than appears on the surface? I have read it three times, each time with greater interest, and each time I have discovered something new—something which convinces me more and more than perhaps, "Thy Days are Numbered" is not quite the work of fiction it seems.

I shall follow your magazine with great interest from now on, to see how Mr. West develops what you are pleased to call the "Great Legend". And, if the story progresses as I think it will (and as I hope it

will) I predict that you will have the honor of publishing for the first time a truly magnificent step forward, a notable advance, in man's history of man.

Richard M. Barr, Calle Galvan 20,
Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic.

(I'll let Brother West answer this one, outside of muttering that I think he'd be amazed were his fiction discovered to be fact.)

TO ARMS, MEN!

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

The July issue of *Futur* was the first one I've ever read, although I'm a steady reader of all the other SF magazines. It's not because I don't like you; just that I've never seen a copy on the stands before. I did enjoy my first copy, and hope I can find you again. (I know. Be safe—subscribe.)

You ask for ratings on the stories and

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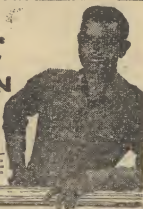
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FUTURE Science Fiction

I'm more than happy to oblige since I'd have probably given ratings even if you hadn't asked. First, "Realization". Very nice. Second, "The Second Ship". Third, "Unreasonable Facsimile". Fourth, "Because of the Stars". Fifth, maybe because I haven't read what came before, "They Shall Rise."

Best letter-writers were Felice Perew, Frank D. Jameson and Mark Johnston in that order.

If the July cover is one of your typically 'girly' covers, I'm for them; I'm for them, anyway. According to advertising psychology, pretty girls sell to men and women, while handsome men make no impression on either. Being a girl, I am flattered that everyone likes pretty girls and no one much cares about looking at men. It stands to reason that the female is the better-looking of the species and likely would make the best impression on extra-terrestrial observers. (That statement is coolly calculated to arouse feelings of dissent among certain people.)

I would appreciate it if you would print my plea to Miami SF fans. A few of us would like to start a fan club, but feel we need more members.

Also, I will welcome correspondence with any and all SF fans, the only requisite is that they promise to keep a steady correspondence.

I think I like you, too, Editor, even though you take up more room than any editor I've seen. At least you say something in your three page space.

All in all, I'm glad I was finally introduced—courtesy my newsstand operator—to *Future*, and I hope the two of us have a long and interesting acquaintance.

—Rusty Silverman, 1939 S. W. 14 Terrace, Miami, Florida

(Do I see a battle worthy of Thurber in my cloudy crystal ball?)

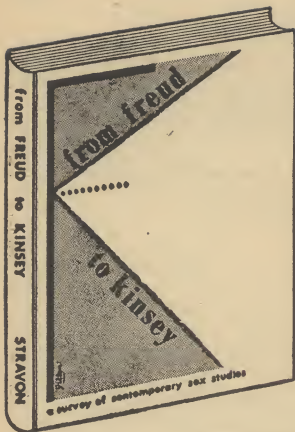
COVER APPROVED

Dear Sir:

I was just getting ready to mail my coupon when I decided to write a few words to send along.

This July issue of *Future* is the first I've read. I bought it for my husband, knowing that he enjoys that sort of thing.

[Turn To Page 88]



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Having nothing to do for a while, I sat down today and read the first one and finally all of the stories.

I must say I was very pleasantly surprised. I enjoyed "Unreasonable Facsimile" very much.

Most of the stories weren't nearly as far-fetched as I had expected.

Oh, yes, I want to congratulate you on the cover. It was quite nice; nothing like most of the covers that science-fiction magazines carried at our newsstand. In fact, your lack of nearly-naked girls was the reason for my choice of your magazine.

—Florence Lefever, Sabara Village, Utah

(Can't say positively as yet, but the odds are that the nearly-naked gals will have to find some other covers to pose upon. Some will miss them, too!)

NOT THE GREATEST

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I have just had the time to sit down and begin to read the July *Future*. And by the first golden footstep of Buddha, if I didn't catch a pic for my little epistle.

I know it is a rather trite expression, but I have to thank everyone who had the kindness to vote for me. Thanks everyone!

Before beginning my letter, I will give my vote to 1) Frank D. Johnston, 2) David King 3) Anthony K. Van Riper.

Well, I see that the cover-girl argument still rages hot and furious, with the shocked intellectuals in one camp and the drooling drugstore cowboys in the other. Personally, I am a shocked intellectual (?) myself.

Mr. Lowndes, I think I can answer briefly a question that has been battered back and forth between science-fictionists. That is, why hasn't SF a wider appeal through book readers? To bring that question up is to raise another to view. What is the difference between pulp-literature and the other, fancier types?

Whoops! I forgot to choose my ills, and here you are nearly going wild. I believe I will take Pete Poulton's illustration for "Devil's Cargo." Thank you again.

Back to this earth-shaking discussion.

Bob, I think you really know, in your heart, the answer to those two questions. Let's confess it. SF isn't the best-written

[Turn To Page 90]

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Now that I am deriding the field, more power to it! But the fans have gotten to the point where they think that the population of Terra is just plain crazy for not setting SF upon a golden dais. The only God is SF, and Campbell-Gold is its prophet.



I would personally like to take these creatures to a public library and just point to the thousands of volumes which represent the ultimate in creative writing. Poe, de Maupassant, Balzac, Joyce, Dickens, Priestly, Hemmingway and Dumas. I am afraid these men did not obtain their fame from writing about Tom Corbett, Space Cadet.

And on the SF side— (I am a fair minded man, at times) SF is not bounded by prejudices, morals, fads, time, science, deros or even Harry S. It is as wide, high and long as space. It recognizes no authority, criticises the highest people, attacks even itself and can break itself. Its constituents are scientists, idiots and geniuses. It grows old but never dies and does not intend to. It is a sacrosanct pile eternally nearing critical mass. It...is science-fiction.

[Turn To Page 92]

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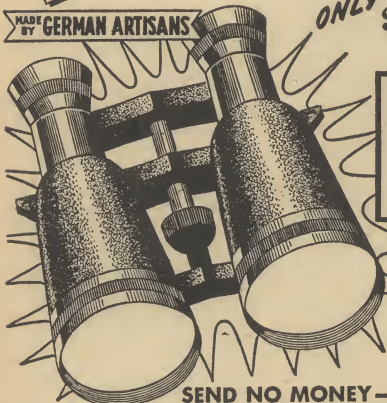
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But thirty-percent of its writers are writers, and seventy percent are hacks. Twenty percent of its publishers and editors act like illiterates; five percent like God himself, fifty percent like scientists and intellectuals. Twenty percent like they have never read a good story in their lives, and five percent like yowling mystics. (I've included you in the fifty percent). The fifty percent conduct themselves like mature human beings, the rest are questionable.

Phee-ew!!

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Readin' and Writhin'

[continued from page 46]

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this theme I have seen); Clifford Simak's "Eternity Lost"; James H. Shmitty's "Witches of Karres"; William Tenn's "Child's Play", and Beam Piper's "Last Enemy" more than make up for it. I don't think you'll regret buying this one, for the rest of the selections are little less enjoyable, and—no doubt—many will want to add several of them to the preferred list.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN offers a much smaller selection in "Tomorrow the Stars", which Doubleday prices at \$2.95, but it's hard to resist an offering that includes C. M. Kornbluth's "Silly Season"; Bob Tucker's "Tourist Trade"; Henry Kuttner's "Absolom"; William Tenn's "Betelgeuse Bridge", and Fritz Leiber's "Poor Superman"—in fact, I wouldn't.

OF LESSER interest, for my taste, is Doubleday's "Science Fiction Omnibus", which offers two volumes heretofore published separately: Bleiler and Dikty's "The Best Science Fiction Stories of 1949" and likewise for 1950. While most of the selections were fair enough, neither volume could qualify for the "best" of either year. If you are attracted by the contents, then it's a reasonable buy for \$2.95, but no way comparable to the much smaller Heinlein anthology; my feeling is that the outstanding stories in the Bleiler-Dikty volume will come up elsewhere, if they haven't already appeared—one of them, "Eternity Lost" is in Campbell's offering—so I'd suggest you wait for future appearance of Shiras' splendid "In Hiding" and "Opening Doors", and Kuttner's "Private Eye".

I'M ALSO mild about Gnome Press' "Five Science Fiction Novels"—asking-price \$3.50. While Norvell Page's "But Without Horns" is, to my way of thinking, not only the outstanding, but the only plausible approach to the "superman" theme I've seen, the writing is little more than competent. Norman L. Knight's "Crisis In Utopia" also has an arresting theme, and is well-written generally; but I find it lightweight when all is said and done, and on the melodramatic side. The other three selections, A. E. Van Vogt's "The Chronicler"; Jack Williamson's "Crucible of Power" and Fritz Leiber's "Destiny Times Three" held my interest upon initial reading, but left me with no urge to take a second look, even had I the time.

"Travelers of Space", a Gnome Press anthology in the "Adventures in Science

READIN' AND WRITHIN'

"Fiction" series, edited by Martin Greenberg, offers a variety of attractions for \$3.95 and should receive an "E" for effort at the very least. It's full of good ideas, such as the series of color plates by Cartier illustrating the speculative "Life on Other Worlds", accompanied by text entitled "The Interplanetary Zoo", by David A. Kyle. The treatment doesn't fulfill expectation. Then there's the "Dictionary of Science Fiction", compiled by Samuel Anthony Peeples; a passable start, but that is all. Finally, there are several very good stories—Hal Clement's "Attitude", A. E. Van Vogt's "The Rull", and H. B. Fyfe's "Bureau of Slick Tricks"—and as one excellent yarn, Poul Anderson's "Double-Dyed Villians", which tackles the same problem that E. E. Smith treated in his "Lensman" stories: How can what we consider the "values of life" be guarded in a super-galactic civilization, without the danger of the watchmen becoming the worst menace of all? Anderson's solution, an enormously clever, human and believable one, makes Kinnison's super boy-scouts look even sillier and unreal than ever.

I must confess ambivalence to this volume; there is much to praise, and were I in the position of the potential buyer, I'd probably pick it up and put it down a number of times before deciding—but I'm afraid that, in the end, I'd buy something else and see if I couldn't promote "Travelers From Space" as a gift from someone!

PS— Since I got a review copy free, I'm hanging on to it!

Space being short, and time shorter, I'm afraid that discussion of two collections—by David H. Keller and A. E. Van Vogt—will have to wait until next month.



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THE RECKONING

A Report on Your
Votes and Comments

Statistics can be confusing; what the point-ratings do *not* show is that Charles Dye's novelet received many first-place votes and enthusiasm, along with a few dislikes. Generally, those who put del Rey first, didn't cotton—to Dye—and vice-versa. So, although he came in apparently neck-and-neck with Bixby, Charles did extremely well against the competition of what I thought was one of del Rey's best stories in quite a time; the extra enthusiasm gives him a clear berth for second place, I think. Here's the cold record:

1. Unreasonable Facsimile (del Rey)	2.30
2. Because of the Stars (Dye)	2.73
3. The Second Ship (Bixby)	2.73
4. They Shall Rise (West)	3.39
5. Realization (Singer)	3.52

As soon as we hear from Frank D. Jameson, David King, and Judith Merril, we'll send them originals, since their letters came out as the best-liked three. Frank gets the one he asks for; David should list one alternate, in case Brother Jameson has already taken Mr. King's first choice, and Judy will have to list two alternates. Incidentally, we sent Philip Brantingham an original, from the March issue, but haven't heard from Mr. Paley and Miss Nelson, nominating two and three respectively. Better get your requests in before we lose track of things; and where are you winners whose names were listed in the September issue?

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Number these in order of your preference, to the left of numeral; if you thought any of them bad, mark an "X" beside your dislikes.

- 1. Doomsday's Color-Press (Jones)
- 2. We Are Alone (Sheckley)
- 3. Legion of the Lost (Coppel)
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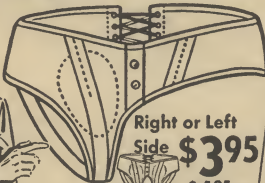
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WALKIE-TALKIE

Figure 1

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